2
ATONEMENT ARC
Higurashi
WHEN THEY CRY
STORY BY
RYUKISHI07
ART BY
KARIN SUZURAGI

Higurashi
WHEN THEY CRY
ATONEMENT ARC

SHE SHOULD BE WAITING RIGHT AROUND HERE...
(SHU... (CLANK)
WHERE THE HELL'S THAT RITSUKO?
THEY TRIED TO RUIN MY FATHER'S LIFE.
TEPPEI HOJO AND RINA MAMIYA.
AS HE FOLLOWED ME THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN OF JUNK...
NOW THIS MAN IS THE ONLY ONE LEFT.
I'VE ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF RINA.
...TEPPEI DIDN'T SUSPECT A THING
IF ANYONE STANDS IN MY WAY...
I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO PROTECT MY HAPPINESS IN HINAMIZAWA.

...I WON'T FORGIVE THEM.
NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE.
FU (FLICK)
WHOA! WHAT HAPPENED?
IT'S PITCH-DARK!
I'M SORRY. MY FLASHLIGHT DOESN'T WORK VERY WELL...

I HAVE A LIGHTER.
LEMME GET IT OUT
OH!
DRAGGIN ME OUT TO THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE
DAMMIT ZITSUKA
WITHOUT EXCEPTION...
BO CHWOOWO
...ALL ENEMIES...

...WILL BE ELIMI-NATED.
CHAPTER 4: THE ENDS OF RESOLVE

Higurashi WHEN THEY CRY ATONEMENT ARC 2

CONTENTS

4 THE ENDS OF RESOLVE 3

5 FRIENDS 49

6 AND THE COTTON DRIFTING 121

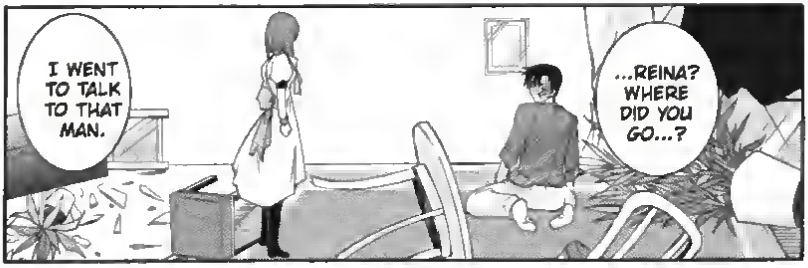
7 THE TRUTH OF THE CURSE 169

!?
ガ
CRASH

DO (SHAKE)
THAT'S WHY I SET ALL THIS UP AFTER I KILLED RINA.
I KNEW HE WOULD COME.
HUH (HUFF)
...
(GULP)
(TREMBLE)
EVERY-THING WAS PERFECT.
I TESTED EVERYTHING CAREFULLY— THE TIME FRAME, THE WEAPON, THE PLACE—SO I COULD KILL HIM IN ONE BLOW.

NOW I'VE KILLED THEM BOTH...
I'VE WORKED SO HARD THAT MY HANDS ARE COVERED IN BLOOD.
I DID ALL THIS SO I COULD TAKE HOLD OF HAPPINESS.
NOW I CAN BE HAPPY.
RIGHT? OYASHIRO-SAMA...?

RIN (HUMMM)
RIN...?


I WENT TO TALK TO THAT MAN.
...REINA? WHERE DID YOU GO...?

YOU HAD BETTER BE VERY CARE-FUL FOR A WHILE, REINA.
THEY'RE NOT THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD LEAVE US ALONE AFTER A LITTLE TALK.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ANYMORE
TEPPEI AND RINA-SAN WON'T COME HERE AGAIN
(SMILE)

.. BUT WILL MY DAD BE ABLE TO RECOVER FROM THE SHOCK OF RINA'S DECEPTION ...?
THEY WON'T BOTHER US ANY-MORE.
GU (CLENCH)

.....
...IT'S OKAY... BECAUSE I KILLED THEM...

...I'M REALLY SORRY...
... REINA ...
I FELL FOR A YAKUZA WOMAN'S LIES AND GOT YOU INVOLVED ...
I REALLY AM A TERRIBLE FATHER.
BORO (CRIP)
I THOUGHT ABOUT THINGS AFTER I COOLED DOWN.
... EH ....?
BORO (CRIP)
I'M...
...A FAILURE AS A FATHER...
BORO
DAD...
I'M REALLY ...
...REALLY SORRY...

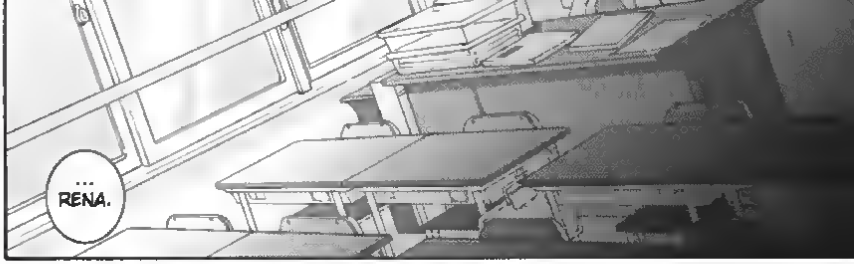
YOU REALIZED WHAT YOU DID WRONG.
ぽん…
…IT'S OKAY.
IT'S OKAY NOW.

…THE ONLY DAD I HAVE.
BESIDES, YOU'RE…

AND…
NOW IF DAD WILL CHEER UP, WE CAN GO BACK TO OUR NORMAL LIFE…

I'M SORRY. I'M SO SORRY …
REINA …

...IF I CAN JUST DISPOSE OF THE BODIES SO THAT NO ONE WILL FIND THEM ...
...THEN IT WILL ALL BE OVER.
I'M ALMOST THERE.
JUST A LITTLE LONGER. AND I CAN PUT AN END TO THIS NIGHT-MARE.
I JUST HAVE TO KEEP WORKING A LITTLE LONGER...
THE NEXT DAY.
RIIIN
RIIIN (RIING)


...
RENA.

RENA?
...
RENA.

WAKE UP.
ゴシゴシ
(GOSHI GOSHI)
ゴスッ
CLASS IS OVER.

UH...
OHH?

I FELL ASLEEP ...?
OHH.

I CAN'T TELL HIM THAT I WAS KILLING TWO PEOPLE ...
EH-HEH-HEH. JUST A LITTLE.
WERE YOU UP LATE LAST NIGHT OR SOME-THING?
YOU WERE FAST ASLEEP.
APPARENTLY I SLEPT ALL THROUGH CLASS.
I GUESS I WAS TIRED AFTER WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT.
RENA HAS ANOTHER THING TO DO TODAY.
I'M SORRY, EVERY-ONE!
ガタン…
CHAIR SCRAPES
UH, UM...
WELL, SHOULD WE START CLUB?
I-I'M REALLY SORRY ...
WHAT? GOING STRAIGHT HOME AGAIN?

I HOPE YOU'LL PLAY WITH ME NEXT TIME...
IT'S SOMETHING I JUST CAN'T GET OUT OF.
...JUST A LITTLE LONGER. I STILL HAVE TO FINISH THIS.
...WELL, IF YOU INSIST, I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO LET YOU GO...
KAA
KAA
KAA (CAW)
IF I CAN JUST DO THAT ...
...THEN I CAN JOIN EVERYONE AT CLUB AGAIN...

THE POLICE WON'T DO ANYTHING JUST BECAUSE THEY DISAPPEARED.
TEPPEI AND RINA WEREN'T HONEST PEOPLE.
BURY THEM DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS OF YAGOUCHI OR TAKATSUDO.
I SHOULD PROBABLY TAKE THEM SOMEWHERE WHERE THERE WILL BE FEWER PEOPLE.
...IT'S POSSIBLE THAT SOMEONE WILL FIND THEM.
BUT IF I LEAVE THE BODIES HIDDEN IN THIS TRASH HEAP...
...TWO ADULT BODIES AS THEY ARE.
BUT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO CARRY..
SO ...
...WHAT SHOULD I DO...?

THERE IS ONE WAY...
GU (CLENCH)
.....
...I HAVE NO CHOICE.
BUT ...
IT'S NOT SOMETHING A HUMAN BEING WOULD DO.
IT'S A BRUTAL ACT.
AND IT WILL BE OVER.
THIS IS ALL I HAVE TO DO.

STARTING TOMOR-ROW...
...I CAN GO BACK TO MY NORMAL LIFE...!!

MEANWHILE...

MIIN (BUZZZZ) MIIN
ミーン ミーンミーン…
MIIN MIIN MIIN…
RENA WAS ACTING KIND OF STRANGE TODAY.
AND WHEN WE ASKED HER TO JOIN US FOR CLUB AFTER-WARD...
I'M SORRY ...
SHE SLEPT ALL THROUGH SCHOOL.

IT'S SOMETHING I JUST CAN'T GET OUT OF.
I HOPE YOU'LL PLAY WITH ME NEXT TIME...
THAT RENA. SHE'S NOT BEING VERY SOCIAL...
SHE WENT STRAIGHT HOME YESTER-DAY TOO.
...SHE SAID, AND THEN SHE WENT HOME...
NOW, NOW, SHE CAN'T HELP IT.

IT WOULD BE FINE IF HER MOM WAS AROUND.
BUT RENA'S FAM-ILY...
SHE HAS THAT MUCH HOUSE-WORK TO DO?
...SHE HAS A LOT OF HOUSE-WORK AND STUFF TO DO.
HOUSE-WORK?
ONCE RENA GETS HOME ...
HER PARENTS ARE DIVORCED.
AND HER MOM'S NOT THERE.
WELL, IT'S NOT SOME-THING YOU GO AROUND TELLING PEOPLE ...
WHA...? I DIDN'T KNOW THAT...

I HAD NO IDEA...
FROM YOUR EVENING MEALS TO YOUR EMERGENCY INSTANT RAMEN RATIONS
SHE SAYS SHE KNOWS EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR DINNER TABLE.
RENA DOES THE SHOPPING FOR DINNER TOO.
I HEAR SHE'S SHOPPING BUDDIES WITH YOUR MOM, KEI-CHAN.

I DIDN'T KNOW SHE HAD FAMILY PROBLEMS.
RENA ALWAYS HAS THAT CAREFREE LOOK ON HER FACE.

BUT HEY, I REALLY APPRECIATE WHAT SHE DOES.

...BECAUSE OF SOMETHING TO DO WITH HER FAMILY TOO...
SO MAYBE SHE'S BEEN ACTING SO DOWN LATELY ...

...BUT RENA STILL MAKES TIME FOR CLUB ACTIVITIES.
SHE HAS SO MUCH TO DO, WITH HOUSEWORK AND SCHOOL...

THAT MEANS ...

...RENA THINKS OF US AS HER FRIENDS ...
...AND MAKES US AN IMPORTANT PART OF HER LIFE.

I GREW UP IN A WARM FAMILY WITH BOTH MY PARENTS.
BUT RENA'S HAD IT REALLY ROUGH...

ISN'T THAT KIND OF A HAPPY THING?
...I SEE.

AND SATOKO AND RIKA-CHAN...
I HEAR THEY'VE BOTH LOST THEIR PARENTS ...

COME TO THINK OF IT, MION TOO...
SHE SAYS SHE LIVES ALONE WITH HER GRANDMOTHER, AWAY FROM HER PARENTS, TRAINING TO BE THE HEAD OF THE SONO-ZAKI FAMILY.

THEY MUST ALL KNOW THE SADNESS OF LOSING FAMILY.
MAYBE THAT'S EXACTLY WHY...
...THEY TREASURE ALL OF US CLUB MEMBERS AS IF WE WERE FAMILY.

OH.
MION-SAAAN!
WHAT ARE WE DOING FOR CLUB TODAY?

I KNOW!
I WANT TO DO SOMETHING TO HELP RENA FEEL BETTER.

WE COULD TRY TO HAVE FUN WITH JUST US, BUT...
WHAT SHOULD WE DO...? RENA'S NOT HERE, SO...

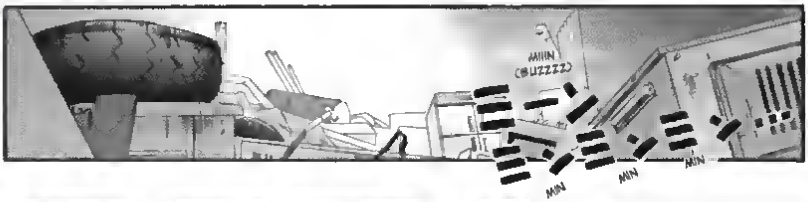
OH! THAT'S A GREAT IDEA.
HEY, WE CAN HAVE CLUB OUTDOORS, RIGHT?

HOW ABOUT TODAY WE GO ON A TREASURE HUNT...
...TO FIND ADOWABLE THINGS?
HMM. I LIKE IT.
BUT WHERE DO WE LOOK?
AND WE'LL GIVE WHAT WE FIND TO RENA!
WHERE ELSE?
RENA'S FAVORITE PLACE.

THE TRASH HEAP!
I DIDN'T REALIZE THE PILE HAD GOTTEN SO MUCH BIGGER.
...THIS IS INCRED-IBLE...!
WE'LL GO THROUGH EVERYTHING AND FIND THE ADOWABLEST THINGS WE CAN!
HEH! EXCEL-LENT!

WE'LL SHOW THEM TO RENA AND HAVE HER DECIDE!
THE WINNER IS WHOEVER FINDS A TREASURE THAT RENA WILL LIKE.
SUI SSKO
LET'S GET THIS ACTIVITY STARTED!
ALL RIGHT !!
I'M NOT GONNA LOSE !!
PA CHAN
ばっ!
YEAH !!

... MEW.
WA-HA-HA! HA-HA!
IT'S NOT JUST FOR SHOW THAT I'M ALWAYS HANGING OUT WITH HER!
IT'S THE SAME AS ALWAYS ...
HEH! DON'T UNDER-ESTI-MATE ME.
OH, DO YOU KNOW WHAT RENA-SAN LIKES, KEIICHI-SAN?
OH-HO-HO-HO-HO!

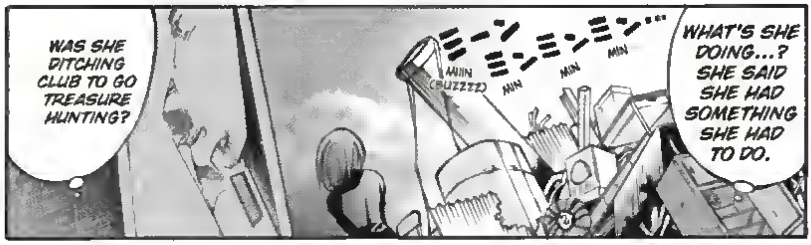

MIIIN
(BUZZZZ)
MIN
MIN
MIN

I'LL FIND A TREASURE RENA WILL LIKE, AND I'LL WIN.
HEH-HEH. THIS WAS A GOOD IDEA FOR AN ACTIVITY, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.

HUH ...?

IF THERE WERE A KENTA-KUN STATUE, I'D HAVE THIS IN THE BAG.
NOW THEN, WHAT WOULD SHE LIKE ...?

... RENA... ISN'T IT...?
THAT'S ...


WAS SHE DITCHING CLUB TO GO TREASURE HUNTING?
MIIN (BUZZZZZ)
MIN
MIN
MIN
WHAT'S SHE DOING...? SHE SAID SHE HAD SOMETHING SHE HAD TO DO.

THAT'S WHAT SHE GETS FOR DITCHING US!
I'LL SNEAK UP ON HER AND SURPRISE HER.
TA (STEP)

... ALLLLL RIGHT.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED WORRYING ABOUT HER.
PON (PAT)

ZA (SHAA)
JIRI (SLIDE)
HEH HEH!
YO, RENA !!

GORI
GRIND

WHA...

WHA...
...KEIICHI-KUN...
WHAT... IS THIS ...?
...IS THAT A BODY...?
IS THAT...
...TO CUT OFF SOME-ONE'S HEAD ...?
RENA'S USING A SAW ...

...
AROUND
RENA.
THOSE
THINGS
...
ARE THEY
PIECES...
...OF
CORPSES
!?

NGH...
UUH...
UGH...
ZA (STEP)
BASA
BASA
BASA (FLAP)
UWAAAAAA!
AAAAHHH!!

WHAT'S THE MATTER!?
AH!!!
DAP (DASH)
WHAT'S WRONG, KEI-CHAN!?

EEEK!?
!!

WH-WHA...
WHA...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING...
...RENA...?

IS THIS A DREAM ...?
AM I DREAM-ING?
RENA CAN'T BE...
...CUTTING PEOPLE UP...
WHY...?
ZA (CUT)
.....
KACHI (CLICK)
WHY, WHY?
WHY...?

I WAS ALMOST THERE.
JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN OVER ...
...TAKE THEM TO THE MOUNTAINS, AND BURY THEM.
I JUST HAD TO CUT THEM UP...
SO WHY...?
WHY NOW ...?

...W...WE... JUST...
ZAA (RUSTLE)
...WE...
...TO CHEER YOU UP...
...WANTED...
...THAT'S... ALL...
GU (CLENCH)

AFTER THAT, NONE OF US...

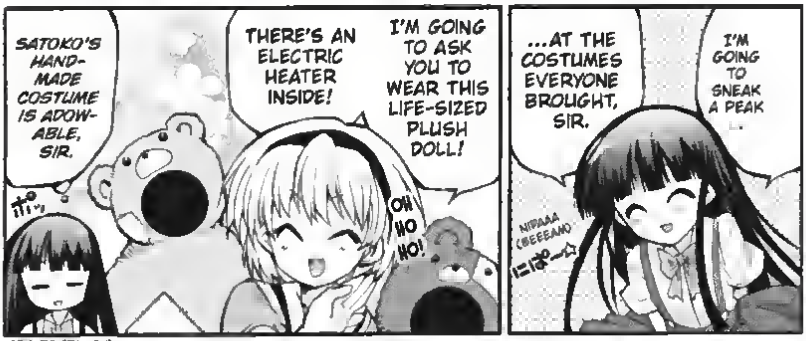
...COULD SAY ANOTHER WORD...

...WHEN TODAY WAS OVER...
...AND TOMORROW CAME...
...I THOUGHT I COULD FINALLY...
...HAVE A HAPPY LIFE HERE IN HINAMIZAWA ...

...WAS LISTEN TO RENA, DUMB-STRUCK.
ALL WE COULD DO...
KANA (CHIRP)
カナカナカナ...
OUR WORLD FROZE...
...AND THE ONLY SOUND WAS THE CRY OF THE HIGURASHI ...
カナカナ...
カナカナカナ...

THE MELANCHOLY OF RIKA FURUDE – PART ONE –

...IS TO PARADE AROUND THE VILLAGE WEARING THE COSTUME PROVIDED BY THE WINNER.
THE PENALTY GAME FOR TODAY'S CLUB ACTIVITY, SIR...


SATOKO'S HAND-MADE COSTUME IS ADOW-ABLE, SIR.
THERE'S AN ELECTRIC HEATER INSIDE!
I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO WEAR THIS LIFE-SIZED PLUSH DOLL!
OH NO NO!
...AT THE COSTUMES EVERYONE BROUGHT, SIR.
I'M GOING TO SNEAK A PEAK
NIPAAA (BEEEAM)

SFX: PO (BLUSH)

OHH... IT'S ADOW-ABLE...
WHAT COSTUME DID RENA BRING...?
I'LL MAKE EVERYONE WEAR THIS RISQUE SWIMSUIT I WON...
...AND TAKE EVERY ONE OF THEM HOME WITH ME!!
MEEE...
(I CAN'T...)
...EEW!!
(...LET HER BEAT ME!!)

TO BE CONTINUED ON PAGE 119

BODIES OF PEOPLE THAT RENA KILLED AND DISMEMBERED...
SCATTERED BODIES.
KANA CHIRP?
KANA
KANA
カナカナカナ...
KANA
KANA
KANA
カナカナカナ...
...EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED ...
I'LL TELL YOU...
...WILL YOU...
...ALL LISTEN...?
...WAS STRANGELY CALM...
RENA'S VOICE ...

...TO THE TALE OF THE HARDEST...
...RENA HAS EVER WORKED IN HER LIFE?
CHAPTER 5: FRIENDS

AND RENA STARTED HER STORY.
SHE TOLD US WHAT BROUGHT HER TO THIS POINT...

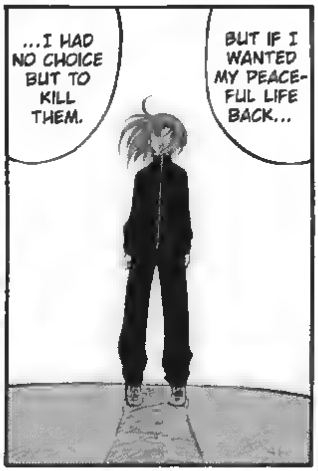
TO THINK RENA'S LIFE HAD BEEN LIKE THIS...
...HER MURDER OF THE TWO YAKUZA ...

THE BADGER GAME BEING PLAYED ON HER FATHER
HER MOTHER'S DIVORCE IN IBARAKI.

AND ...
THE MIS-FORTUNES THAT BEFELL THE RYUGU HOME, ONE AFTER ANOTHER

...HOW HARD...
...DO PEOPLE HAVE TO WORK...
...IN ORDER TO BE HAPPY...?
I DIDN'T WANT TO KILL THEM.
I KNOW THAT IT'S WRONG TO KILL PEOPLE.

AND I GRABBED MY CHANCE FOR HAPPINESS. THAT'S ALL.
I WORKED AS HARD AS I POSSIBLY COULD.

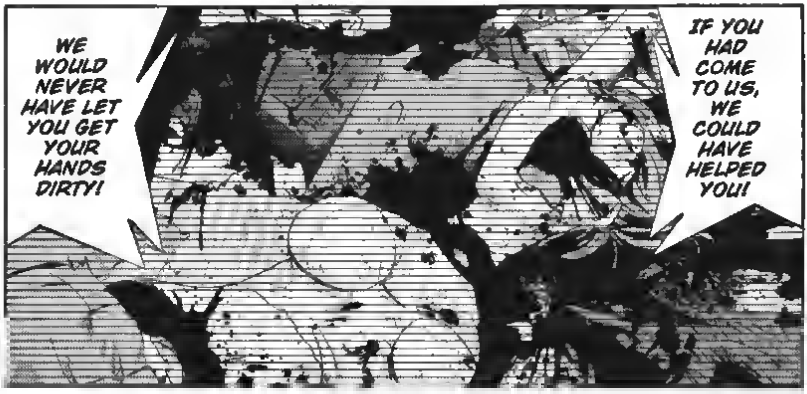

...I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO KILL THEM.
BUT IF I WANTED MY PEACEFUL LIFE BACK...

ACTUALLY, I WISH THEY WOULD PRAISE ME!!
NO ONE IN THE WORLD CAN BE-LITTLE MY BEST EF-FORTS!
RENA RYUGU FOUGHT AGAINST HER DESTINY!
AND SHE CON-QUERED IT!!!

カナカナカナ…
KANA (CHIRP)
KANA
KANA
カナカナカナ…
KANA
KANA
KANA
KANA
I'VE NEVER HEARD RENA SPEAK SO FIERCELY.
...JUST HOW MUCH SUFFERING DID SHE ENDURE ...?
BUT ...
BUT RENA ...
GH! (GENDA)
グッ

GO TO YOU?
.....
...COME TO US?
...WHY DIDN'T YOU...

WE'RE LIKE FAMILY, AREN'T WE!?
WE'RE YOUR FRIENDS, AREN'T WE?

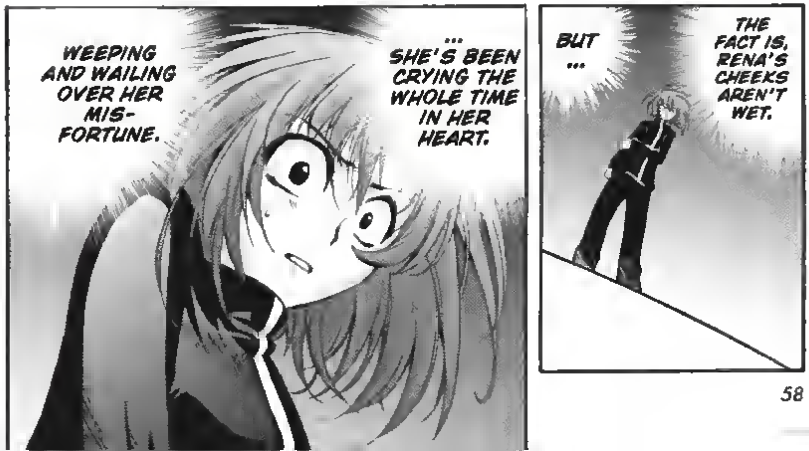

WE WOULD NEVER HAVE LET YOU GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY!
IF YOU HAD COME TO US, WE COULD HAVE HELPED YOU!

IF WE HAD BEEN ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER ...
...WE COULD HAVE MADE IT TO A BETTER FUTURE THAN THIS!!
A BETTER FUTURE ...
...THAN THIS?
THERE'S NO SUCH THING.
THIS IS THE BEST FUTURE THERE IS.

HA
GASP!
はっ
YOU'RE LYING !!
YOU DON'T THINK THIS IS THE BEST!
LOOK. TO PROVE IT...
RENA!
YOU'VE BEEN CRYING THIS WHOLE TIME!!

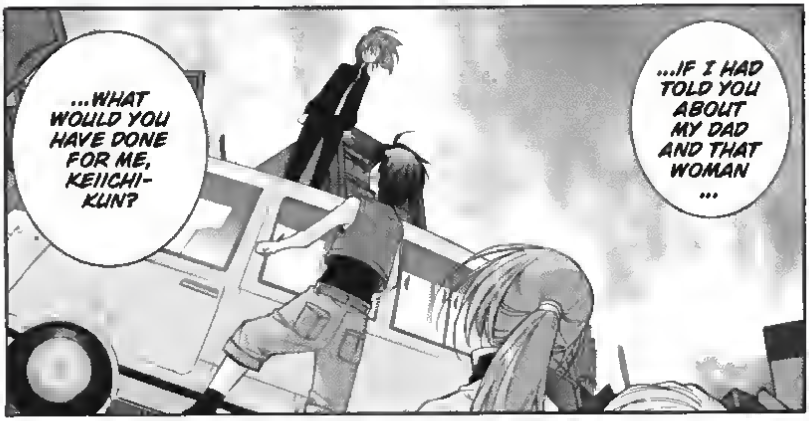
WHEN DID I SHED A SINGLE TEAR!?
WHO'S CRYING ?
ME?
HUH ...?

CAN'T YOU TELL !!?
JUST NOW! YOU'VE BEEN CRYING THIS WHOLE TIME!


WEEPING AND WAILING OVER HER MIS-FORTUNE.
... SHE'S BEEN CRYING THE WHOLE TIME IN HER HEART.
BUT ...
THE FACT IS, RENA'S CHEEKS AREN'T WET.

ANYONE WHO CAN'T SEE THAT...
...DOESN'T CARE ABOUT RENA FROM THE BOTTOM OF HIS HEART!!
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
YOU'RE SO STUPID! STUPID, KEIICHI!
AH-HA-HA! WHO WOULD CRY OVER THIS?
...KEIICHI-KUN, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

THAT!
THAT'S YOU CRYING!! THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT !!
.....
SO...


...IF I HAD TOLD YOU ABOUT MY DAD AND THAT WOMAN ...
...WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME, KEIICHI-KUN?

!
.....
I...

SEE? IT'S EXACTLY LIKE WHAT HAPPENED LAST YEAR.
I CAN'T DEPEND ON HELP FROM FRIENDS.
... LAST YEAR ...?
ZAA (RUSTLE)

SATOSHI HOJO... SATOKO-CHAN'S BROTHER.
"SA-TOSHI" ...?
...ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED WITH SATOSHI-KUN LAST YEAR.
...YOU WOULDN'T KNOW, KEIICHI-KUN...
...BEAT HIS AUNT TO DEATH AND THEN DISAP-PEARED.
LAST YEAR, SATOSHI-KUN...
BEAT...TO DEATH!?
WHA...?

SATOSHI-KUN WAS THE MOST RESERVED MEMBER OF THE CLUB
BUT HE WAS DRIVEN TO HIS BREAKING POINT, AND HE GOT BLOOD ON HIS HANDS...
SATOSHI-KUN'S FAMILY HAD BEEN IN FAVOR OF THE DAM PROJECT.
SO EVERY-ONE IN THE VILLAGE PERSECUTED THEM.
AFTER THEIR PARENTS PASSED AWAY...
...THEIR AUNT TOOK THEM IN.
AND NOW IT WAS THEIR CROOKED AUNT...
...WHO WAS BULLYING THEM.
SATOSHI-KUN SPENT EVERY DAY SHIELDING SATOKO-CHAN.
IT WORE HIM RAGGED...

SO HE CAME TO HIS FRIENDS FOR HELP.
SATOSHI-KUN COULDN'T DO ANY-THING BY HIMSELF.
RIGHT? MII-CHAN?
NO, WE WOULDN'T DO ANY-THING.
BUT WE COULDN'T DO ANY-THING.
BUT YOU DIDN'T HELP SATOSHI-KUN.
YOU'RE THE HEIR TO THE SONOZAKI FAMILY, THE MOST POWERFUL FAMILY IN THE VILLAGE, MII-CHAN.
YOU WERE BOUND BY VILLAGE CUSTOMS— THAT WAS YOUR EXCUSE FOR NOT DOING ANYTHING.
AND ALL YOU DID WAS PITY SATOSHI-KUN.
THE HOJO FAMILY WAS IN FAVOR OF THE DAM. YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO OSTRACIZE THEM.

BUT YOU BETRAYED HIS FEELINGS, MII-CHAN.
SATOSHI-KUN WANTED SALVA-TION.

...HOW HARD IT WAS FOR SATOSHI-KUN?
MII-CHAN, DO YOU KNOW...
... NGH ...

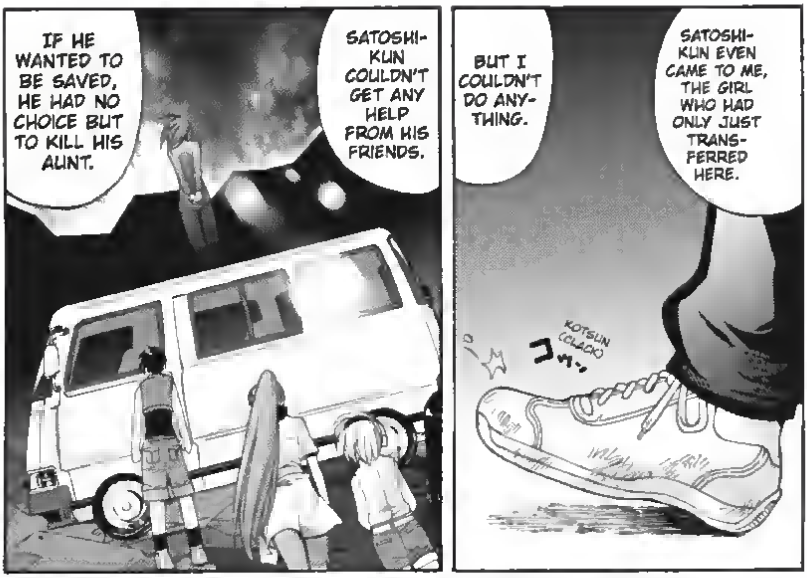
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEAK OUT TO THE VILLAGE.
YOU'RE THE PRIESTESS OF THE FURUDE FAMILY.

YOU'RE NO DIF-FERENT, RIKA-CHAN.

YOU ONLY PATTED SATOSHI-KUN AND SATOKO-CHAN'S HEADS AND "CONSOLED" THEM.
BUT YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.
I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO SAVE SATOSHI AND SATOKO
THAT'S RIGHT
STEP
DO YOU KNOW HOW THAT BETRAYED SATOSHI-KUN'S HEART?
I WON'T DENY THAT GUILT.
...I DIDN'T KNOW, SO I DID NOTHING.
RIKA-CHAN...

...THE GUILTIEST OF ALL...
...AND ...
...SATOKO-CHAN.
...IS YOU ...
...BUT I AM WELL AWARE OF MY CRIMES.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'LL BELIEVE ME...
...I KNOW.
SATO-KO-CHAN, YOU—
I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF NII-NII.
I THOUGHT ONLY OF MY OWN PAIN.

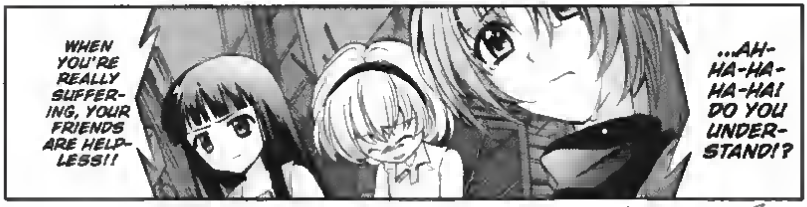
EVERY DAY I DID...
...IT MADE NII-NII— THE ONE PROTECTING ME— SUFFER MORE.
...RIKA-CHAN, MION ...
...SA-TOKO ...
...KEIICHI-KUN, IT'S JUST LIKE YOU HEARD.
...IN 1982, WHEN I WASN'T HERE...
...TO THINK ALL OF THAT HAPPENED ...


IF HE WANTED TO BE SAVED, HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO KILL HIS AUNT.
SATOSHI-KUN COULDN'T GET ANY HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS.
BUT I COULDN'T DO ANY-THING.
SATOSHI-KUN EVEN CAME TO ME, THE GIRL WHO HAD ONLY JUST TRANS-FERRED HERE.
KOTSUN (CLACK)
SATOSHI-KUN DESPERATELY DID WHATEVER HE COULD ON HIS OWN.
WHEN SOMEONE IS REALLY SUFFERING, HE GETS DESPER-ATE.
...NOT ONE OF THEM COULD SAVE HIM!
AND EVEN THOUGH HE HAD FOUR FRIENDS ...

UNDER-STAND!?
BA-BAM
THIS IS WHAT FRIENDS REALLY ARE!!
EVEN WHEN I WAS LIVING SOME-WHERE ELSE, IT WAS THE SAME!
BASA (FLAP)
BASA
BASA
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT!
THEY'RE NOT ALLIES! THEY WON'T DO ANY-THING FOR YOU!
FRIENDS ARE JUST PLAY-MATES!
BE-CAUSE NO ONE WAS GOING TO HELP ME!!
THAT'S WHY I WORKED ALL ON MY OWN FROM THE BEGIN-NING!

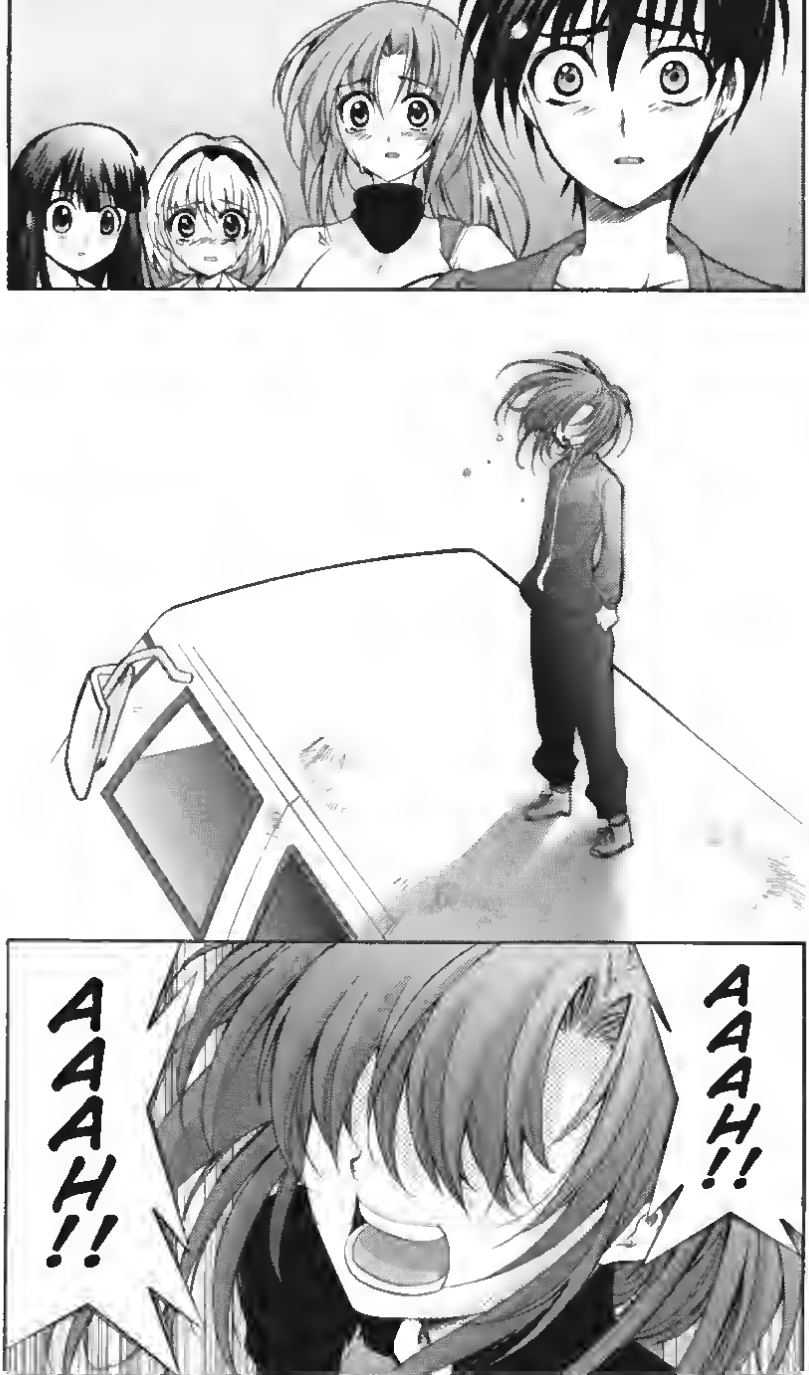
I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED IT IF YOU WERE STILL PLAYING SOME CLUB GAME!
IT'S JUST DEPRESSING WHEN PEOPLE PITY ME WITHOUT TRYING TO HELP!
IT MADE ME FORGET ALL THE TROUBLE WITH THAT WOMAN!!
MY TIME AT SCHOOL WITH ALL OF YOU REALLY WAS FUN!
...AFTER ALL, THE ONLY WAY HE COULD SAVE HIMSELF ...
...WAS TO KILL HIS AUNT...
MAYBE IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN A LITTLE OF THE WEIGHT OFF HIS HEART.
SATOSHI-KUN SHOULD HAVE STAYED AND PLAYED AT SCHOOL TOO.

AH-HA... I'M JUST LIKE SATOSHI-KUN.
THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE MYSELF WAS TO KILL THEM...


WHEN YOU'RE REALLY SUFFER-ING, YOUR FRIENDS ARE HELP-LESS!!
...AH-HA-HA-HA-HA! DO YOU UNDER-STAND!?

THAT'S WHY I DID IT ALL ON MY OWN!!
I LEARNED THAT A LONG TIME AGO!

STOP MAKING THAT FACE AND PRAISE ME!
SEE? AREN'T YOU IMPRESSED!?
I'M TELLING YOU TO PRAISE ME!!
AHH HA HA HA!
AH HA HA HA HA!
AH HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!


AAAH!!
AAAH!!

WAAAHHAAAAHH
AAAAHHH

WAAAAHH
WAAAAHH
FEELING THE DESPAIR OF NOT BEING ABLE TO HELP A FRIEND ...?
IS EVERY-ONE ELSE IN DESPAIR TOO?
SHE FEELS THE DESPAIR OF HER FRIENDS BEING POWER-LESS.
...RENA IS IN DESPAIR.
IS THAT ALL WE ARE?
DAMMIT!

IS THERE NO POINT IN HAVING FRIENDS?

A LONG TIME AGO, BEFORE I CAME TO HINAMIZAWA...
...I THOUGHT THE SAME THING.
EVERYONE AT SCHOOL AND CRAM SCHOOL...
...WAS SOMEONE I WAS COMPETING WITH.
BUT...
...HERE IN HINAMIZAWA, I...
PLEASED TO MEET YOU, NEW STUDENT!

KEIICHI, HUH? SO I CAN CALL YOU KEI-CHAN, RIGHT?
I'LL TELL YOU EVERY-THING ABOUT THE NEIGH-BORHOOD!
I...
I...
HERE IN HINAMI-ZAWA, I...
YOU CAN FALL INTO A TRAP FOR ALL I CARE, MY DEAR SIR!
MEW! ☆
TODAY WE'D LIKE TO GREET OUR NEWEST MEMBER!

KEIICHI MAEBARA-KUN!!
WELCOME TO OUR CLUB!

RENA!!

I...
...WON'T ABAN-DON YOU!!
AND MION AND THE GIRLS AREN'T LIKE THEY WERE LAST YEAR EITHER!
THEY'LL HELP YOU!
WHO CAN TURN THEIR BACK...
...ON A FRIEND IN PAIN !!?

I AGREE IT'S TOO BAD I WASN'T IN THE VILLAGE LAST YEAR.
LAST YEAR?
EVEN SATOKO SAID, DIDN'T SHE?
...KEI-ICHI-KUN ...
THEY WON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES !!
THEY ALL KNOW WHAT THEY DID WRONG !!
...WEREN'T HERE LAST YEAR! HOW CAN YOU KNOW THAT!!?
Y... YOU ...
IF I HAD BEEN HERE LAST YEAR ...
...I COULD HAVE KILLED SATOSHI'S AUNT!!

IT'S EASY TO SAY YOU'D HAVE DONE SOME-THING AFTER THE FACT !!
Y-YOU'RE LYING!
I'D MAKE OFF WITH A METAL BAT OR SOME-THING AND GET IT DONE IN 15DO SECONDS !!
I'M NOT LYING!!
...THAT HAPPI-NESS WON'T LAST LONG.
...LOOK. IF YOU DO SOMETHING WRONG, THEN EVEN IF IT DOES MAKE YOU HAPPY...
GH...
YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU, RENA?
YOU KNOW THAT KILLING PEOPLE WAS NOT THE BEST CHOICE!
Hi-

THE TRUTH IS, YOU REGRETTED IT ALL ALONG! DIDN'T YOU!?
YOU'RE THE LIAR!
IT'S A LIE!!!
TH-THAT'S A LIE!
BUT YOU REJECTED THOSE FEELINGS, AND NOW YOU'RE TRYING TO JUSTIFY YOURSELF!!
THE TRUTH IS, YOU DIDN'T WANT TO KILL THEM! YOU WANTED TO COME TO US! YOU WANTED OUR HELP!!

WHY DO YOU KEEP CLINGING TO THAT STUPID IDEA...
...WHEN IT MEANS REJECTING YOUR FRIENDS FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE!?
FORGET THAT AND TRUST US!
WE'RE ON YOUR SIDE, RENA!
WE'RE YOUR ...
...FRIENDS!!

M...
...MY...
...
FRIENDS
...?

...THIS TIME, WE CAN DO IT RIGHT.
BUT ...

YOU WERE IMMATURE TOO, RENA.
...THESE GUYS, ME—WE WERE ALL TOO IMMATURE

...EASY TO SAY THAT...
...
IT'S
...

...BUT I'M...
...
ALREADY DIRTY.

BUT YOU DID IT BECAUSE THERE WEREN'T ANY OTHER OPTIONS.
YOU COMMITTED A CRIME, RENA.
グスッ
(SNIFF)

...AND I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU EITHER.
SO I DON'T THINK OF YOU AS DIRTY...
!!!
BA DUMP

SO I...
...ACCEPT YOUR CRIME.

I...
...FORGIVE YOU FOR EVERYTHING, RENA.
K...
KEIICHI-KUN...
...SO, RENA, GIRLS...
...WILL YOU FORGIVE ME OF MY CRIME...?

I COULDN'T TELL YOU WERE SUFFERING UNTIL TODAY, RENA.
THAT IS THE CRIME I COMMITTED THAT LED TO WHAT HAPPENED TODAY.

KEIICHI-SAN.
...KEIICHI.
...KEI-CHAN.

OUR PEACE-FUL LIFE!!
IF WE DO THAT, WE CAN TAKE IT BACK!
DAHU (THUMP)
WE JUST HAVE TO GO HIDE THEM IN THE MOUNTAINS, LIKE YOU WERE PLANNING FROM THE BEGINNING.
...WE'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO KNOW ABOUT THESE BODIES.
GASH (GRAB)

THIS IS IT, RIGHT? THE FUTURE YOU WANTED !!
THIS IS IT! THE CHOICE YOU WANTED TO MAKE !!!

... BUT ...
...IT'S TOO LATE.

GO ON! TAKE MY HAND!
IT'S NOT TOO LATE!
...WE CAN GRAB THE FUTURE !!!
IF WE ALL REACH OUT TO EACH OTHER...
...BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN EVERYONE AGREES WITH YOU, YOU KNOW ...!!
I-I APPRECIATE WHAT YOU SAID, KEIICHI-KUN...

SU (SOB)
...RENA. YOU ARE NOT DIRTY.
!
RIKA-CHAN!
...HOW COULD I NOT BE BY YOUR SIDE?
WHEN YOU'RE THAT KIND OF PER-SON...
EVEN AFTER YOU GOT COVERED IN MUD, YOU SEIZED THIS DAY.
YOU NEVER BACKED DOWN.

I KNOW HOW COMFORT-ABLE IT IS TO LET MYSELF FALL.
I'VE BEEN SWALLOWED UP IN A LABYRINTH OF MISERY FROM WHICH THERE IS NO ESCAPE
...I FORGIVE YOU.
LIKE KEIICHI ...
. HOW STRONG YOU ARE FOR CON-TINUING TO FIGHT, FOR NEVER YIELDING
THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I CAN UNDER-STAND ...
SO I WANT YOU...
...TO FORGIVE ME TOO.
BYU (SQUEEZE)
RIKA-CHAN...
...KEI-ICHI-KUN...

SATOKO ...
...R-RIKA AND I BOTH ...
...HAVE LOST OUR PARENTS AND ARE ALL ALONE.
BUT TO THIS DAY, I HAVE NEVER FELT THAT GRIEF.
BE-CAUSE ALL OF YOU...
...ARE MY FAMILY OF FRIENDS.
.....
I WANT TO STAY IN THIS FAMILY.
TODAY WE WERE BLESSED WITH THIS CHANCE TO FORGIVE EACH OTHER.
AND I'M GRATEFUL.

I FORGIVE YOU OF YOUR CRIME, RENA-SAN.
...PLEASE FORGIVE ME TOO.
...A FAMILY OF FRIENDS, HUH?
THAT'S A GOOD ANALOGY, COMING FROM YOU!
AS YOUR CLUB PRESIDENT AND AS YOUR FRIEND, I'M ASHAMED THAT I DIDN'T SENSE WHAT WAS GOING ON.
I WANT YOU TO FORGIVE ME.
ぽんっ
PON (PAT)
MION.
OF COURSE, I FORGIVE RENA FOR NOT COMING TO US TOO.

IT JUST GOES TO SHOW HOW IMMATURE I WAS.
SO I FORGIVE YOU OF YOUR CRIME, RENA!
...KEIICHI-KUN, RIKA-CHAN.
SATOKO-CHAN, MII-CHAN.
WE'RE ALL READY OVER HERE.
COME ON, RENA.

...REACHED OUT A HAND!!
WE'VE ALL...

COME OVER HERE!
BA CHAN
WE'RE JUST WAITING FOR YOU.

...RENA, WE—
WON'T I ONLY BE A BURDEN TO ALL OF YOU?
...BUT RENA IS A MURDER-ER...!

RIKA-CHAN, WE DON'T NEED WORDS ANY-MORE!!

JUST SHUT UP AND PUT OUT YOUR HAND!!
AND YOU DON'T NEED WORDS ANY-MORE EITHER, RENA!

COME ON, RENA! IT'S NOWHERE NEAR TOO LATE!!
THERE'S STILL TIME! YOU CAN CHOOSE!!

WE...
...CAN START OVER !!

NH...

WE WERE ABLE TO BECOME TRUE FRIENDS.
AND SO WE FORGAVE EACH OTHER OF OUR CRIMES.
... BURY THE BODIES DEEP IN THE MOUN-TAINS...
THEN WE ALL HELPED...
ALL RIGHT! WE'RE DONE! LET'S GO HOME!
...AND PUT AN END TO IT ALL...
RENA?
.....

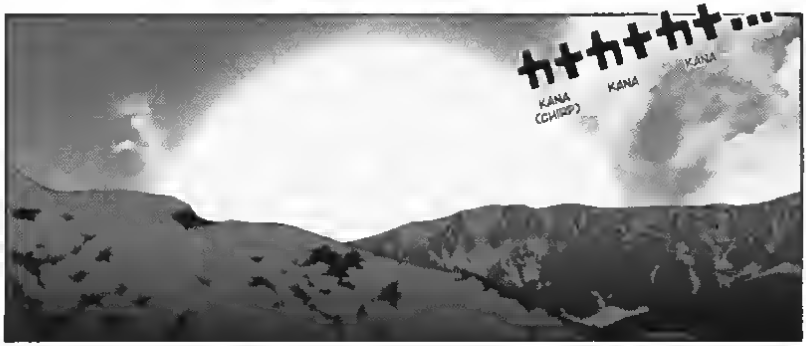
IF I HADN'T RUN INTO ALL OF YOU...
BUT I WAS AFRAID TO FACE THE FACT THAT I'D KILLED SOMEONE.
I'VE BEEN PRE-TEND-ING TO BE OKAY.
GYUU...
...IF I HAD TAKEN CARE OF IT ALL MYSELF...

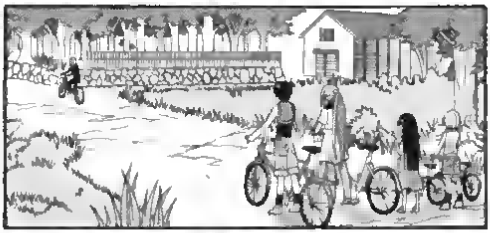
SFX: GYUU (SQUEEZE)

...THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BEAR THE WEIGHT OF MY CROSS.
I THINK IT WOULD HAVE CRUSHED ME...
RENA...
ALL OF A SUDDEN...
...A STRANGE MEMORY FLASHED ACROSS MY MIND.

I GOT BLOOD ON MY HANDS.
...I REJECTED MY FRIENDS AND WENT BERSERK ALL BY MYSELF.
JUST LIKE RENA...
ANOTHER ME, IN A DIFFERENT WORLD.
AND THE OUTCOME THAT GREETED ME...
...WAS THE END OF THE WORLD.

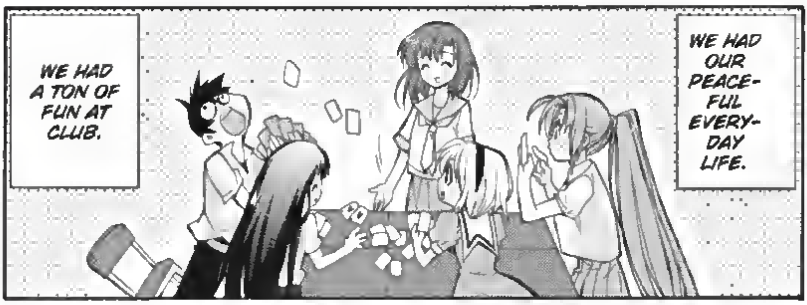
BUT WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT WAS DIFFERENT.
IN THE DREAM, IT WAS THE SAME FOR ME AS IT WAS FOR RENA, UP TO THE POINT OF KILLING SOMEONE.
IS IT A DREAM I ONCE HAD...?
WHAT IS THIS MEMORY?
SHE HAS US, HER FRIENDS.
RENA IS NOT ALONE.
LET'S TAKE BACK OUR HAPPY LIFE.
ALL OF US, TOGETHER !!


カナカナカナ…
KANA (CHIRP)
KANA
KANA



WHAT DO YOU THINK?
...I THINK WE SHOULD ALL FORGET WHAT HAPPENED TODAY.
...SO ABOUT TOMOR-ROW...
I THINK THAT WOULD BE BEST.
...BY NOT TALKING ABOUT IT, IT WILL TURN INTO A MEMORY...
...AND SOMEDAY, WE'LL FORGET IT.
AND WHEN WE'VE ALL FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT COMPLETELY ...
...WE'LL HAVE REACHED OUR GOAL.

THEN WE WENT BACK TO OUR DAILY ROUTINE.
MMM (BUZZZZ)
MMM
MMM


WE HAD A TON OF FUN AT CLUB.
WE HAD OUR PEACE-FUL EVERY-DAY LIFE.

GOOD MORNING, KEIICHI-KUN!

GOOD MORN-ING, RENA!

POSTER: HERE IT IS AGAIN!! HINAMIZAWA VILLAGE COTTON DRIFTING / JUNE 19TH (SUN.) / THERE WILL BE A DANCE OFFERING PERFORMED AT FURUDE SHRINE

THE COTTON DRIFTING FESTIVAL ...

I WONDER WHO'S GOING TO DIE THIS YEAR.

IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN...

... CURSE.
OYASHIRO-SAMA'S ...
TAKANO-SAN...?
THE UN-HAPPINESS ATTACKING RENA...
... WASN'T OVER.

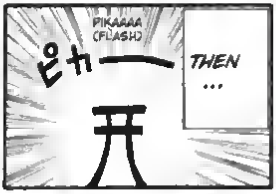
RENA WINS!
SHE WINS!

RIKA FURUDE IS IN THE GREATEST CRISIS OF HER LIFE...!!
MEW!!

...I HAVE A VERRRRY A-A-A-ADOWABLE COSTUME FOR YOU...!!
R-R-R-RIKA-CHAN...
GA (JERK) GA GA

SAVE ME, OYASHIRO-SAMAAAA!!!
I ORDER YOU, AS THE EIGHTH PRIEST-ESS OF THE FURUDE FAMILY!

BUT THIS COSTUME IS ADOWABLE TOO.
OHH...
PROP BAG
OH...? THESE AREN'T THE CLOTHES RENA BROUGHT.


PIKAAAA (FLASH)
THEN...

BACKPACKED RIKA-CHAN!
MEW...
I'M TAKING YOU HOME WITH MEEEE!!
リカ
SHIRT: RIKA
YOU STUPID DEITY !!
OHH!
OHH!
YOU SWITCHED RENA'S COSTUME WITH THE ONE I BROUGHT, DIDN'T YOU?
OHHHHHH!
UHH! UHHHH!

CHAPTER 6: AND THE COTTON DRIFTING

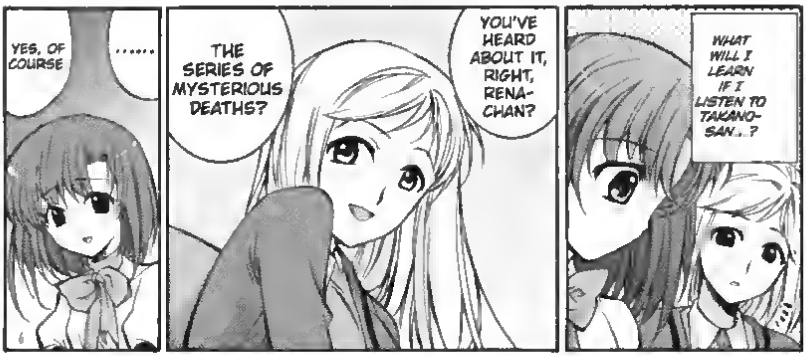
IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN THIS YEAR.
OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...
KUSU KUSU
KUSU KUSU
クークー...
TAKANO-SAN...
SAY, RENA-CHAN. YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO BE IN-TERESTED, WOULD YOU?

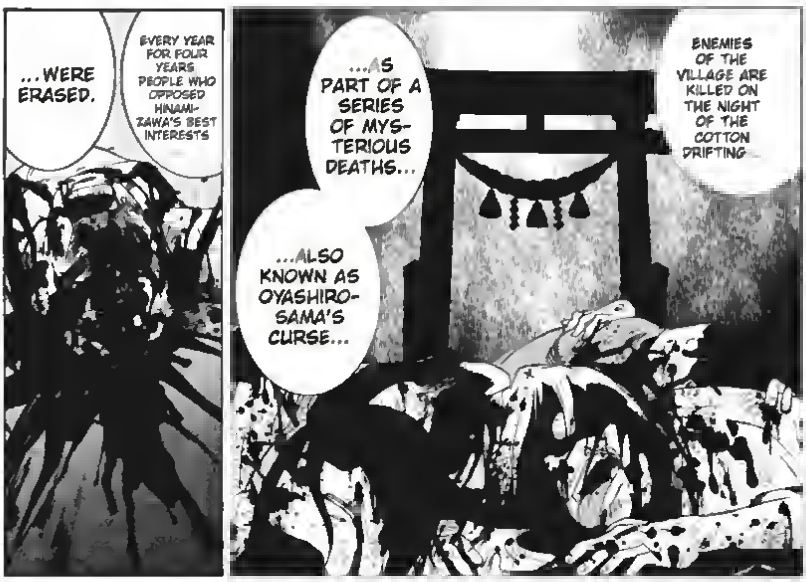
IN FINDING OUT THE TRUE NATURE OF OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...?
THE CURSE'S TRUE NATURE?
MIIN
BUZZZZ
MIN
MIN
IT'S NOT EVERY DAY I RUN INTO YOU IN THE LIBRARY, RENA-CHAN.
YES, THAT'S TRUE.
I DON'T KNOW HER VERY WELL.
BUT I HEAR SHE'S A BIT OF AN ODD-BALL WHO LOVES THE OCCULT.
MIYO TAKA-NO-SAN.
SHE'S THE NURSE AT IRIE CLINIC.

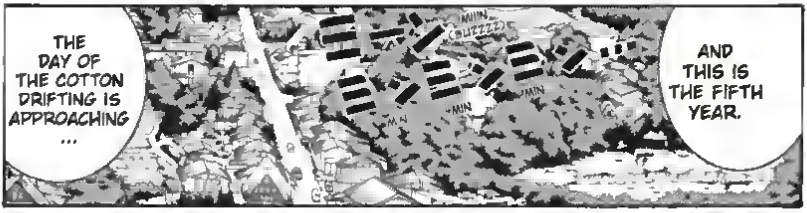
I WAS ONCE TOUCHED BY OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...
...AND, UNABLE TO ESCAPE MY MISERY UNTIL JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO, I KILLED TWO PEOPLE.
OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...

SFX: GYU (SQUEEZE)
I SHOULD FINALLY BE FREE OF OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...
...I'VE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE BACK MY PEACEFUL LIFE, I THINK.
BUT THANKS TO KEIICHI-KUN AND THE OTHERS...

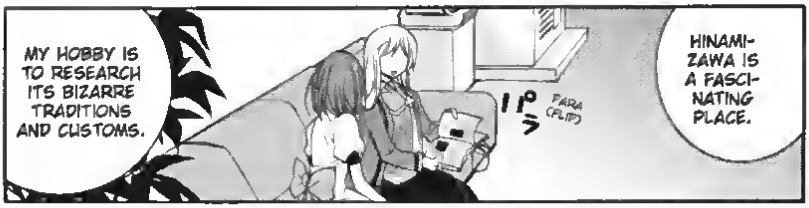
...I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER...
BUT...
JUST WHAT IS THIS "OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE" THAT'S PLAGUED ME?
DID THE OYASHIRO-SAMA I SAW REALLY EXIST...?


YES, OF COURSE
.....
THE SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS DEATHS?
YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT IT, RIGHT, RENA-CHAN?
WHAT WILL I LEARN IF I LISTEN TO TAKANO-SAN..?


...WERE ERASED.
EVERY YEAR FOR FOUR YEARS PEOPLE WHO OPPOSED HINAMI-ZAWA'S BEST INTERESTS
...AS PART OF A SERIES OF MYS-TERIOUS DEATHS...
...ALSO KNOWN AS OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...
ENEMIES OF THE VILLAGE ARE KILLED ON THE NIGHT OF THE COTTON DRIFTING


THE DAY OF THE COTTON DRIFTING IS APPROACHING ...
AND THIS IS THE FIFTH YEAR.

IS THERE ANYONE LEFT TO BE CURSED...?
THE DAM WAR IS OVER.
...FOR THE FIFTH YEAR'S CURSE.
I'M SURE SOMETHING WONDERFUL WILL HAPPEN THIS YEAR...
KUSU (GIGGLE) KUSU
クスクス
IT'S NOT A QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO DESERVE TO BE CURSED.
OH?
...HAS NO OTHER PURPOSE THAN TO PERPETUATE THE CURSE.
THIS SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS DEATHS...



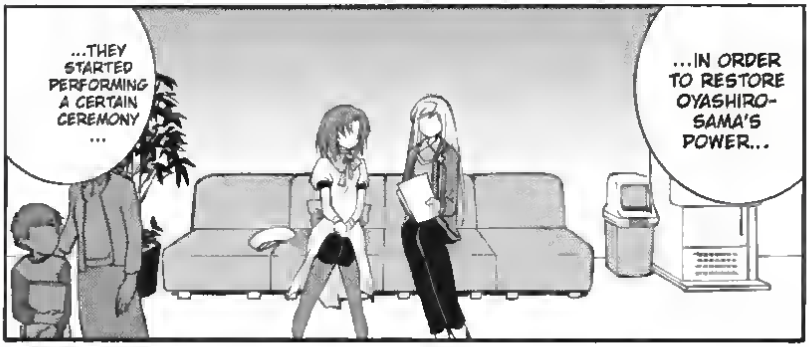
HINA-MIZAWA USED TO BE CALLED ONIGA-FUCHI VILLAGE.
THE VILLAGERS ALL FERVENTLY BELIEVED IN OYASHIRO-SAMA.
...BUT YOU SEE, THERE WERE THOSE WHO WOULDN'T ALLOW THAT.
PEOPLE WHO KEPT THE OLD TRADITIONS INTACT.
BUT WITH THE MODERNIZA-TION THAT STARTED IN THE MEIJI ERA,* THAT FAITH GRADUALLY WANED
EVENTUALLY, ONLY A VERY FEW PEOPLE BELIEVED IN OYASHIRO-SAMA.

*THE MEIJI ERA BEGAN IN 1868 AND LASTED UNTIL 1912.

PEOPLE WHO BLINDLY AND PASSIONATELY BELIEVED IN OYASHIRO-SAMA.
PEOPLE WHO WERE RIGHTLY CALLED RELIGIOUS FANATICS

AND SO ...
THEY COULDN'T STAND TO SEE FAITH IN OYASHIRO-SAMA DECLINE.

RELIGIOUS FANATICS OF OYASHIRO-SAMA...?

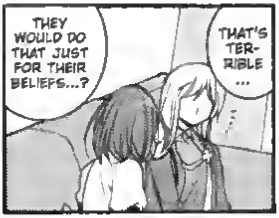

...THEY STARTED PERFORMING A CERTAIN CEREMONY ...
...IN ORDER TO RESTORE OYASHIRO-SAMA'S POWER...

YES.
HEE HEE HEE.
YOU MEAN...?
CERE-MONY ...?

OTHERWISE KNOWN AS OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE.
THE SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS DEATHS THAT OCCUR EVERY YEAR ON THE NIGHT OF THE COTTON DRIFTING.

...TO SHOW THE VILLAGERS THAT OYASHIRO-SAMA EXISTS.
THE FANATICS MAKE OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE HAPPEN ...
ONE MEETS WITH DEATH.
THE OTHER IS ABDUCT-ED BY DEMONS.
FOLLOWING THE ANCIENT ONIGAFUCHI LEGEND, THEY MAKE TWO SACRIFICES ON THE NIGHT OF THE COTTON DRIFTING

THAT'S WHAT MAKES THEM FANATICS.
HEE HEE.
NIKKORI (SMILE)


THEY WOULD DO THAT JUST FOR THEIR BELIEFS...?
THAT'S TER-RIBLE ...

BASI-CALLY ...
THIS IS THE CONCLUSION I'VE REACHED.
...THIS SERIES OF MYSTERI-OUS DEATHS ISN'T A CURSE.
THEY'RE CAUSED BY PEOPLE.

PEOPLE ...?

AFTER THAT, TAKANO-SAN EXPLAINED EVERYTHING ENTHUSIASTICALLY, REFERENCING HER OLD RESEARCH MATERIAL.
HEARING IT FROM TAKANO-SAN'S MOUTH, HER CRAZY CONSPIRACY THEORY STRANGELY MADE SENSE.
B...BUT... IS THERE ANYONE WHO COULD CARRY OUT SUCH A CONSPIRACY?
EVEN WITH THE POLICE INVESTIGATING?
GOOD QUESTION...
BUT WITH THE THREE FAMILIES OF HINAMIZAWA...
HATSU (SHOCK)
...OR EVEN WITH THE POWER OF THE SONOZAKI FAMILY ALONE...
...I THINK IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE.

THE SONOZAKI FAMILY...
MII-CHAN'S FAMILY...
IT'S TRUE THAT THE SONOZAKIS ARE A DISTINGUISHED HINAMIZAWA FAMILY THAT REVERES OYASHIRO-SAMA...
AND IT'S SAID THEY HAVE INFLUENCE WITH THE POLICE AND POLITICIANS.
BUT I DON'T WANT TO THINK THAT MII-CHAN'S FAMILY IS INVOLVED IN SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
BESIDES ...
PAPER: HOUSEWIFE BEATEN TO DEATH
...TAKANO-SAN'S THEORY DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FOURTH YEAR.
THE POLICE SAY THE MURDER WAS COMMITTED BY A DRUG ADDICT.
主婦撲殺
BUT THE FOURTH YEAR'S INCIDENT WAS WHEN SATOSHI-KUN...
...BEAT HIS AUNT TO DEATH TO PROTECT SATOKO-CHAN FROM HER BULLYING.

SO MAYBE THE SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS DEATHS IS ALL COINCIDENCE.
AND EACH DEATH JUST HAPPENED TO OCCUR ON THE NIGHT OF THE COTTON DRIFTING...
IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN DONE BY RELIGIOUS FANATICS.
I DON'T HAVE ANY PROOF, BUT I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT'S WHAT HAP-PENED
ミーン ミンミーンミン...
...HE WAS DRIVEN TO THE EDGE, AND HE SAID TO ME...
A SHORT TIME BEFORE SATOSHI DISAP-PEARED...
...THERE'S ONE MORE THING THAT BOTHERS ME.
AND ...
THIS IS SOME-THING ONLY I KNOW...

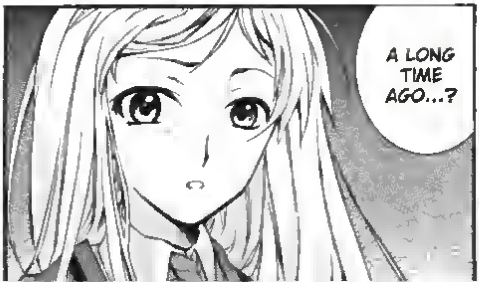
I HEAR ONE...
...EXTRA FOOT-STEP...
...I WOULD HEAR ONE EXTRA FOOTSTEP BEHIND ME.
WHEN I WAS SUFFERING UNDER THE CURSE...
I HAD HEARD THEM BEFORE TOO
THE FOOT-STEPS.
→STEP←
→STEP←
→STEP←
→STEP←

...OYASHIRO-SAMA'S FOOTSTEP.
IT WAS...
-STEP-
...OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...?
...THEN WAS WHAT ULTIMATELY DROVE SATOSHI-KUN TO MURDER ...
IF THE FOOTSTEPS SATOSHI-KUN HEARD REALLY DID BELONG TO OYASHIRO-SAMA ...

...LIKE I WAS BACK THEN...
IF SATOSHI-KUN REALLY WAS UNDER OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...

... MIGHT ACUTALLY BE BEHIND ALL OF THIS.
...THEN OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE ...

I WAS JUST REMEM-BERING SOMETHING FROM A LONG TIME AGO.
YES, I'M FINE.


A LONG TIME AGO...?

ARE YOU FEELING ALL RIGHT?
OH? WHAT'S THE MATTER, RENA-CHAN?

TAKANO-SAN MIGHT NOT BELIEVE ME WHEN I TELL HER, BUT...
...WILL YOU LISTEN TO MY STORY NOW?
UM, TAKANO-SAN...
SURE. YOU LISTENED TO ME WITHOUT LAUGHING, AFTER ALL.
IT WAS NOTHING LIKE HOW JIROU-SAN REACTED!
EH...?
... OYASHIRO-SAMA.
...I'VE MET...
TELL ME ANY-THING, RENA-CHAN.
...I...
YOU MIGHT LAUGH AT ME WHEN I SAY THIS, BUT...

AND THEN...
...SO YOU HIT ON THE PRECEPT OF OYASHIRO-SAMA THAT SAYS YOU MUST NOT LEAVE THE VILLAGE.
A...A LONG TIME AGO...
...I LEFT HINAMI-ZAWA AND MOVED TO IBARAKI.
ONE TIME I CUT MYSELF WITH A KNIFE.
...MY FAMILY FELL APART, AND EVERY-THING WAS TERRIBLE.
...THE CUT...
WH... WHEN I DID...
...OVERFLOWED...
...WITH MAGGOTS!

...YOU MIGHT THINK I WAS DELUSIONAL, BUT...
MAGGOTS ...?
.....

...FELT MAGGOTS SQUIRMING THROUGH MY VEINS...
...BUT AT THE TIME, I REALLY ...

...I SCRATCHED ...AND SCRATCHED, BUT I COULDN'T SCRATCH THE MAGGOTS OUT.
THE MAGGOTS POURED OUT...
IT ITCHED AND ITCHED.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH BLOOD GUSHED OUT OF THE WOUND...
...I DIDN'T CARE. I JUST KEPT SCRATCHING...!
...OYASHIRO-SAMA CAME.
AND WHEN I COULDN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER...
OYASHIRO-SAMA GOT RID OF ALL THE MAGGOTS....
...AND TOLD ME TO GO BACK TO HINAMIZAWA.

...I THINK THAT MAYBE ...
... BECAUSE OF THAT EXPERI-ENCE...
BUT I KNOW I SAW OYASHIRO-SAMA.
THE DOCTORS AND MY DAD WON'T BELIEVE ME.
SHIN (SILENCE)
=/-/...
HA-HA. YOU CAN'T BELIEVE IT, CAN YOU?
...OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE REALLY IS BEHIND THE SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS DEATHS.
SUPA
RENA-CHAN.

I...DO BELIEVE YOU...
...RENA-CHAN.

.....
EH ...?

IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE PROOF.
THAT'S JUST ONE THEORY.
KUSU (GIGGLE)
くすくす
KUSU

YOU SAID THE SERIES OF MYS-TERIOUS DEATHS ARE PROBABLY CAUSED BY PEOPLE ...
BUT JUST NOW ..

DON'T YOU FIND IT FASCINATING?
THREE POSSIBILITIES.
OR IT MIGHT BE A COINCIDENCE, AND THEY'RE JUST A BUNCH OF INDIVIDUAL INCIDENTS.
I CAN'T DENY THE POSSIBILITY THAT OYASHIRO-SAMA MIGHT REALLY BE CURSING PEOPLE.
IS THE REAL CAUSE OF THE SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS DEATHS ...
...PEOPLE, A CURSE, OR A COINCIDENCE ...?
HEE-HEE... RIGHT...? RENA-CHAN?
I'LL NEED TO DO MORE RESEARCH.
.....

SFX (SHUFF)
?
A SCRAP-BOOK?
I'VE NEVER LET ANYONE BORROW THIS BEFORE. IT HAS ALL MY RESEARCH IN IT.
IF YOU DON'T MIND, RENA-CHAN, I'D LIKE YOU TO READ IT.

...NO...
IT'S POSSIBLE THAT YOU, RENA-CHAN, CAN FIND THE TRUTH BEHIND THESE INCIDENTS...
THE TRUTH ...?
.....
...THE TRUTH BEHIND OYASHIRO-SAMA.
...IF THEY FOUND OUT I WAS DOING THIS RESEARCH ...
...I MEAN, IF THOSE FANATICS ...
DON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT THIS SCRAP-BOOK.
SHH!
...BUT I HAVE JUST ONE REQUEST.
YES. PLEASE KEEP IT THAT WAY.
... IT'S A SE-CRET ?

...THEY MIGHT ERASE ME.
HEE HEE HEE.

カナカナカナカナ
KANA
KANA
KANA
KANA

TAKANO-SAN'S SCRAP-BOOK...

ぎゅっ...
GYU (GRASP)

BUT WILL I REALLY LEARN ANYTHING ABOUT OYASHIRO-SAMA FROM THIS?
SHE SAID I MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET CLOSE TO THE TRUTH ABOUT OYASHIRO-SAMA.

...IT'S NO USE. MY HEAD FEELS HEAVY.
.....

...I ALWAYS FEEL A PRICK-LING PAIN IN MY HEAD.
WHEN I REMEM-BER THE PAST...
I CAN'T CONCENTRATE. I FEEL LIKE I HAVE A BIT OF A FEVER.
IS IT BECAUSE I TOLD TAKANO-SAN ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED IN IBARAKI?
...I FEEL BAD DOING THIS TO TAKANO-SAN...
...BUT I DON'T THINK I CAN READ THIS NOW...
PATAN (SHUT)
I FINALLY GOT MY HAPPY LIFE BACK.
I'LL FORGET ABOUT OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE.

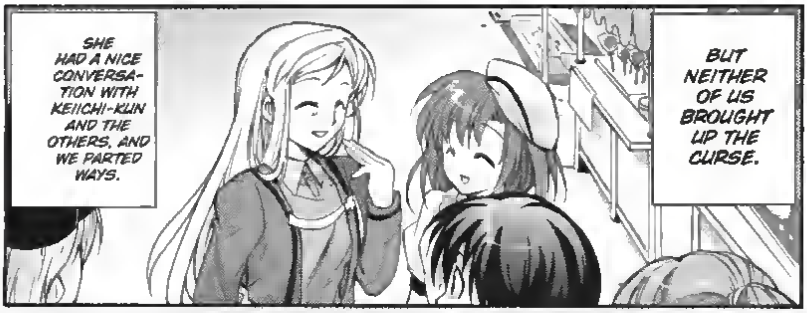
AND IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR THE COTTON DRIFTING FESTIVAL. I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THAT.
I'LL JUST THINK ABOUT WHAT'S AHEAD.

AND A FEW DAYS PASSED.
ドン
ドン
ドン
ドン

ピーヒャラ
PIIHYARA (FLUTTER)
THE COTTON DRIFTING FESTIVAL ARRIVED.
ドンドン
DON
DON
DON (BOOM)
ドンドン
I WENT THERE WITH MY CLUB FRIENDS.

DURING THE FESTIVAL, WE MET TOMITAKE-SAN.
BUT IT DIDN'T STOP ME FROM PLAYING HARD ALL OVER THE FESTIVAL WITH KEIICHI-KUN AND THE OTHERS.
IT'S TOO BAD THAT MY LITTLE FEVER NEVER WENT AWAY.
...AND WE ENJOYED AN INTENSE GAME.
TOMITAKE-SAN JOINED US FOR CLUB ACTIVITIES ...
AND WE WERE ABLE TO MAKE THE BEST MEMORIES EVER.
OF COURSE, WE HAD A BLAST WITH THE PENALTY GAME TOO.
SHIRT (L-R) COME PLAY WITH US AGAIN — KEIICHI
PLEASE LET US SEE YOUR PHOTOS NEXT TIME OKAY? — RENA
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE YOUR MAJOR DEBUT THIS YEAR! — MION

...WE RAN INTO TAKANO-SAN, WHO HAD COME TO GET TOMITAKE-SAN.
AFTER THE FESTIVAL ENDED...


SHE HAD A NICE CONVERSATION WITH KEIICHI-KUN AND THE OTHERS, AND WE PARTED WAYS.
BUT NEITHER OF US BROUGHT UP THE CURSE.

OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME ANYMORE.
I'M SURROUNDED BY WONDERFUL FRIENDS.

I CAN HAVE A FUN LIFE WITH EVERY-ONE...
...HERE IN HINA-MIZAWA.

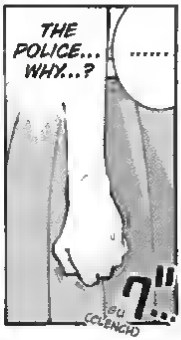
MMMM CRUZZZZZ
ミーン
ミンミンミン…
MIN
MIN
MIN
A FEW DAYS LATER...
ALLLLL RIGHT! SCHOOL'S OVER!
LET'S HAVE CLUB!
AH...
SCHOOL'S OUT ALREADY ...?
...WHAT'S WRONG? YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD.
DO YOU STILL HAVE THAT FEVER ?

HUH? RENA'S NOT FEELING WELL?
YOU'VE BEEN LIKE THIS SINCE THE COTTON DRIFTING FESTIVAL ...
POOR, POOR LITTLE RENA, SIR...
RENA ...
YOU'RE NOT STAYING UP TOO LATE, ARE YOU?
MAYBE YOU CAUGHT A SUMMER COLD AND IT'S GOTTEN BAD.
AND AFTER MY FUN LIFE FINALLY CAME BACK...
IT'S ANNOYING THAT THIS LITTLE FEVER WON'T GO DOWN...

RYU-GU-SAN.
I'M SORRY FOR WORRYING ALL OF YOU...
...HERE TO PICK UP HER SCRAP-BOOK.
MAYBE IT'S TAKANO-SAN...
BUT I HAVEN'T READ IT YET.
TOTA (TROT)
TOTA
THERE'S SOMEONE TO SEE YOU AT THE FRONT DOOR.
IT'S NICE TO SEE YOU, RYUGU-SAN.
HI THERE.
ZA (STEP)

I'M OOISHI, FROM THE OKINOMIYA POLICE.
県警察
YOU ARE REINA RYUGU-SAN, CORRECT?
トト

DID THEY FIGURE OUT I KILLED RINA AND TEPPEI ...?
IT CAN'T BE...


THE POLICE... WHY...?
.....
?!!
GU (CLENCH)

MIGHT I BORROW JUST A BIT OF YOUR TIME...?
NOW, NOW I'M NOT GOING TO EAT YOU.

YOU KNOW JIROU TOMITAKE AND MIYO TAKANO, CORRECT ?
I'LL GET RIGHT TO THE POINT.

ニーーーーーン...

YES... WHAT ABOUT THEM?
IT'S NOT ABOUT RINA?

THEY'RE DEAD.
THEY DIED ON THE NIGHT OF THE COTTON DRIFTING.

JIROU TOMITAKE PASSED AWAY...
...WHEN HE CLAWED OUT HIS OWN THROAT.

...EH?

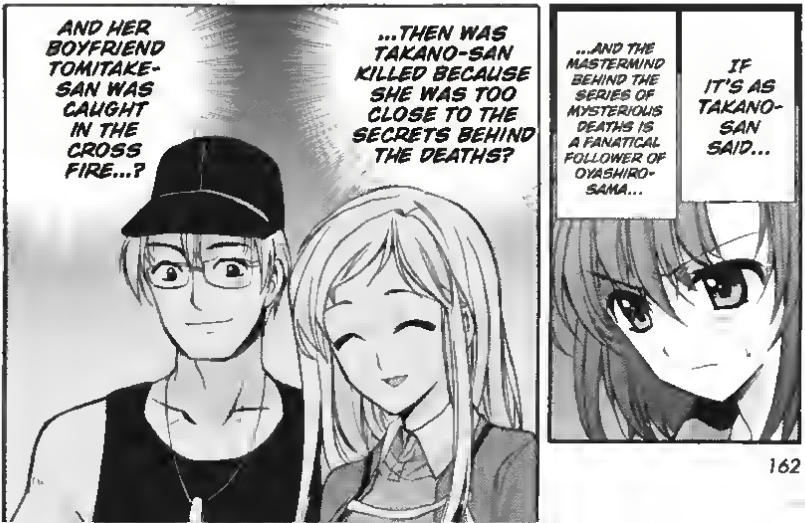
AND MIYO TAKANO WAS FOUND IN THE MOUNTAINS IN GIFU...
... WHA ...?

...STUFFED INSIDE AN OIL DRUM...
...AND BURNED TO DEATH.
!?

I UNDERSTAND THE TWO WERE LOVERS.
PERHAPS THEY GOT CAUGHT UP IN SOMEONE'S GRUDGE...
IF THEY FOUND OUT I WAS DOING THIS RESEARCH...
...THEY MIGHT ERASE ME.
THEY COULDN'T REALLY HAVE...
...KILLED TAKANO-SAN BECAUSE OF HER RESEARCH ...!?

WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO COOPERATE WITH OUR INVESTIGATION, RYUGU-SAN?
WE SAW THE MESSAGES YOU ALL WROTE ON TOMITAKE-SAN'S SHIRT. THAT'S WHY I CAME TO TALK TO YOU.
MIIIN (BUZZZZ)
MIN
MIN
MIN

...AND THE VICTIMS WERE TOMITAKE-SAN AND TAKANO-SAN.
THERE WERE TWO MORE MYSTERIOUS DEATHS ON THE NIGHT OF THE COTTON DRIFTING...


AND HER BOYFRIEND TOMITAKE-SAN WAS CAUGHT IN THE CROSS FIRE...?
...THEN WAS TAKANO-SAN KILLED BECAUSE SHE WAS TOO CLOSE TO THE SECRETS BEHIND THE DEATHS?
...AND THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS DEATHS IS A FANATICAL FOLLOWER OF OYASHIRO-SAMA...
IF IT'S AS TAKANO-SAN SAID...

OOISHI-SAN SUSPECTS IT WAS ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR CAUSED BY SOME DRUG, BUT THAT'S NOT IT.
TOMITAKE-SAN SCRATCHED AT HIS NECK UNTIL HE DIED.
BUT THAT'S STRANGE ...
IT WAS ...
...THE MAGGOTS ...
...AND HE COULDN'T BEAR THE ITCHING.
THERE WERE MAGGOTS SQUIRMING THROUGH TOMITAKE-SAN'S VEINS...

HE KEPT SCRATCHING AT HIS THROAT UNTIL IT KILLED HIM.
JUST LIKE I ONCE DID!!!
WAS SHE CURSED BECAUSE SHE TOUCHED ON SOMETHING TABOO...?
...TAKANO-SAN WAS RESEARCHING OYASHIRO-SAMA.
THEN WAS TAKANO-SAN TOO?
TOMITAKE-SAN WAS CURSED BY OYASHIRO-SAMA.

.....
...I DON'T KNOW...

I DON'T KNOW, I DON'T KNOW. IS THIS A SECRET PLOT BY SOME STRANGE FANATICS?
OR IS IT OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE?
OR IS IT JUST A SERIES OF COINCIDENCES?

PEOPLE, A CURSE, OR A COINCI-DENCE...
WHICH IS THE TRUTH!?

...MIGHT LEARN THE TRUTH OF OYASHIRO-SAMA.
YOU, RENA-CHAN...

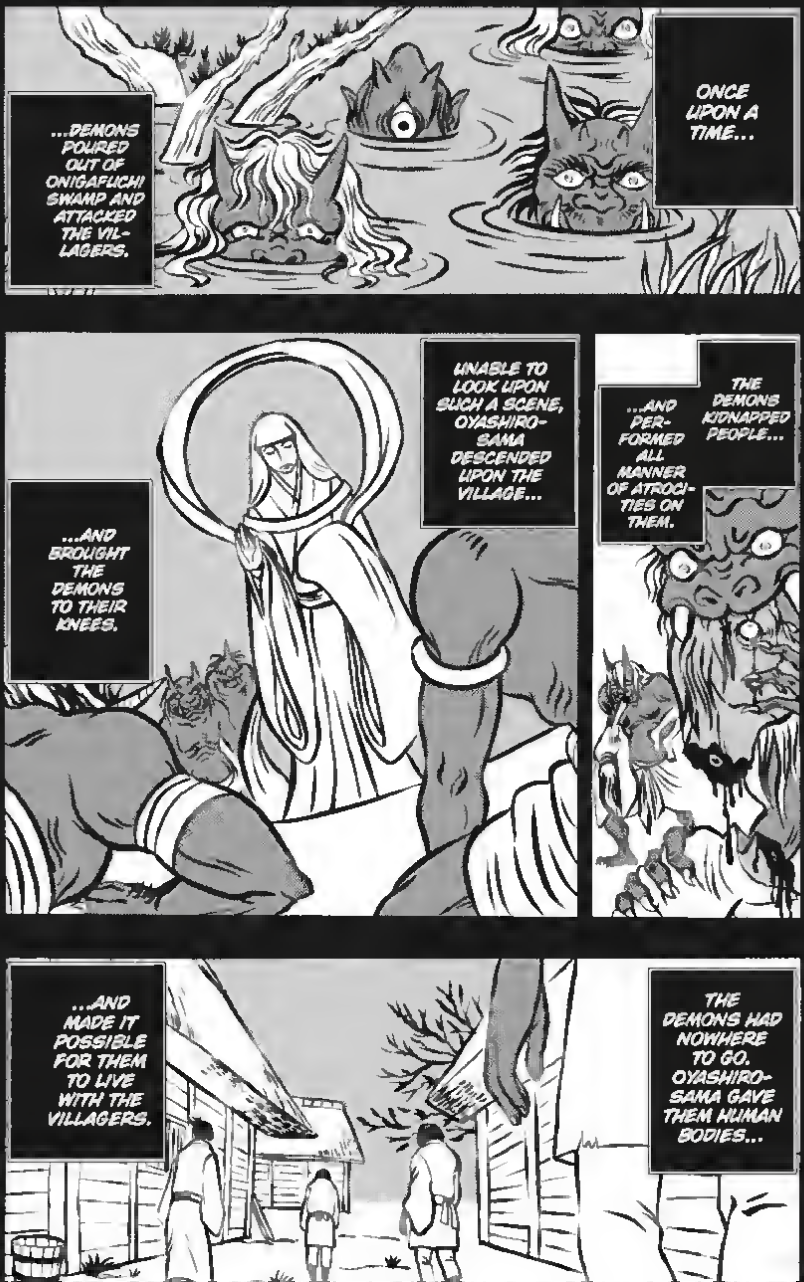
...THE TRUTH MIGHT BE SLEEPING INSIDE.
THAT'S RIGHT! IF I READ THE SCRAP-BOOK...
はっ
(Ha?)
...FOR BEING TOO CLOSE TO THE TRUTH...
...BUT IF TAKANO-SAN WAS KILLED ...
...THEN NEXT WILL BE...
.....!!

...WILL BE ME.
NEXT...
I HAVE THE SCRAPBOOK.
THEY MIGHT KILL ME NEXT...!?
カナカナカナカナ
KANA

CHAPTER 7: THE TRUTH OF THE CURSE

TOMITAKE-SAN SCRATCHED HIS OUT THROAT AND DIED.
TAKANO-SAN WAS BURNED TO DEATH...
...BECAUSE SHE TOUCHED ON SOME TABOO?
OR WERE THEY REALLY CURSED BY OYASHIRO-SAMA...
...BECAUSE SHE WAS DOING RE-SEARCH ON OYASHIRO-SAMA?
WERE THEY KILLED BY OYASHIRO-SAMA FANATICS...
...IN THIS SCRAP-BOOK...!?
IS THE TRUTH...
GU CLENCH
...

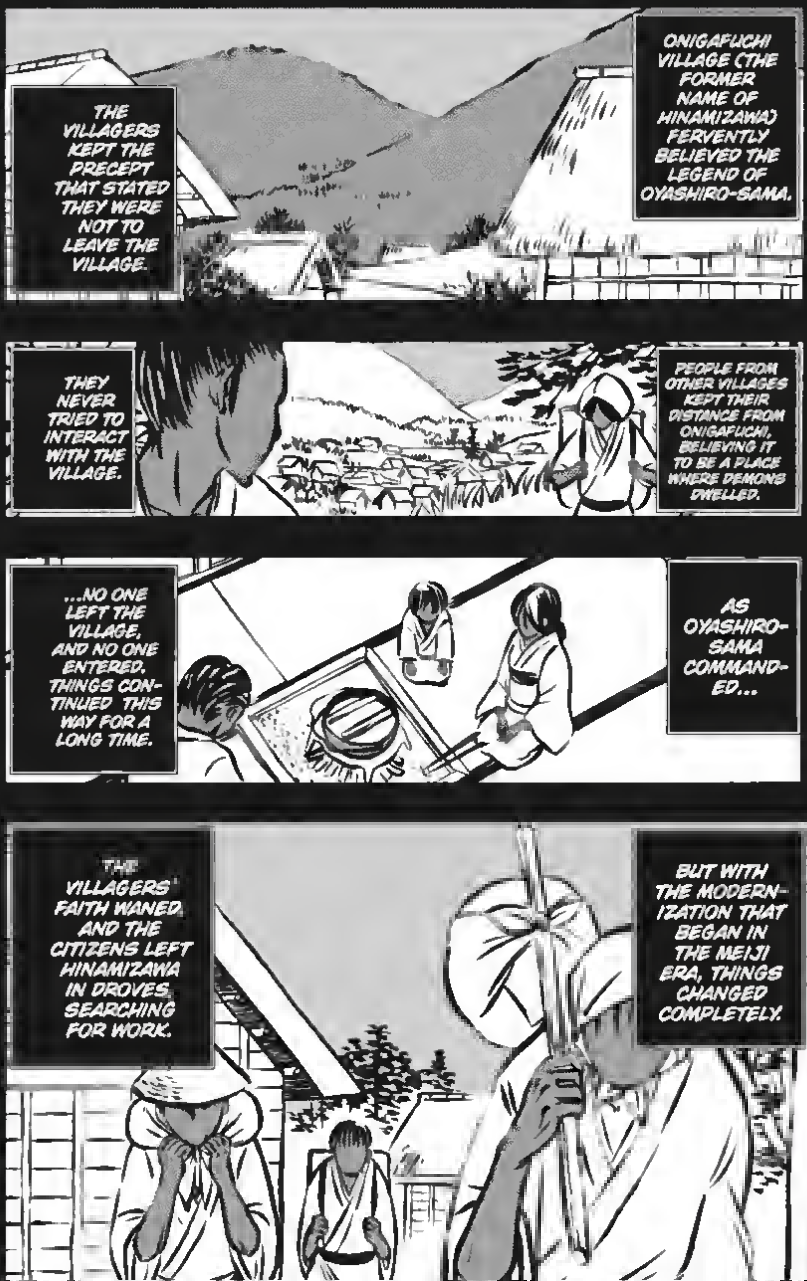
...FROM THE MOMENT TAKANO-SAN HANDED ME THE SCRAP-BOOK.
BESIDES, IT'S POSSIBLE I WAS ALREADY IN DANGER...
...EVEN IF I RUN, I'M SURE THE CURSE WILL FOLLOW ME.
I SHOULD THROW THIS AWAY WITHOUT READING IT.
I SHOULDN'T GET INVOLVED WITH OYASHIRO-SAMA ANY-MORE
BUT ...
I'LL READ THIS SCRAPBOOK AND FIND THE TRUTH.
IN THAT CASE, I WON'T RUN AWAY.
THE TRUTH OF OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...!


ONCE UPON A TIME...
...DEMONS POURED OUT OF ONIGAFUCHI SWAMP AND ATTACKED THE VILLAGERS.
THE DEMONS KIDNAPPED PEOPLE...
...AND PERFORMED ALL MANNER OF ATROCITIES ON THEM.
UNABLE TO LOOK UPON SUCH A SCENE, OYASHIRO-SAMA DESCENDED UPON THE VILLAGE...
...AND BROUGHT THE DEMONS TO THEIR KNEES.
THE DEMONS HAD NOWHERE TO GO. OYASHIRO-SAMA GAVE THEM HUMAN BODIES...
...AND MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO LIVE WITH THE VILLAGERS.

"YOU MUST NEVER ACCEPT ANY OUTSIDERS INTO THE VILLAGE."
"YOU MUST NEVER LEAVE THIS VILLAGE.
AND OYASHIRO-SAMA GAVE THEM A COMMAND.

IF YOU DO...

...THERE WILL BE A CURSE.


ONIGAFUCHI VILLAGE (THE FORMER NAME OF HINAMIZAWA) FERVENTLY BELIEVED THE LEGEND OF OYASHIRO-SAMA.
THE VILLAGERS KEPT THE PRECEPT THAT STATED THEY WERE NOT TO LEAVE THE VILLAGE.
PEOPLE FROM OTHER VILLAGES KEPT THEIR DISTANCE FROM ONIGAFUCHI, BELIEVING IT TO BE A PLACE WHERE DEMONS DWELLED.
THEY NEVER TRIED TO INTERACT WITH THE VILLAGE.
AS OYASHIRO-SAMA COMMAND-ED...
...NO ONE LEFT THE VILLAGE, AND NO ONE ENTERED. THINGS CON-TINUED THIS WAY FOR A LONG TIME.
BUT WITH THE MODERN-IZATION THAT BEGAN IN THE MEIJI ERA, THINGS CHANGED COMPLETELY.
THE VILLAGERS' FAITH WANED, AND THE CITIZENS LEFT HINAMIZAWA IN DROVES, SEARCHING FOR WORK.

POTA
ポタ
POTA (DRIP)
ポタ
BUT A PROBLEM AROSE.
MANY OF THE VILLAGERS WHO LEFT COMPLAINED OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL MALADIES.
THOSE WITH STRONGER SYMPTOMS WOULD REPEATEDLY SHOW SIGNS OF CONFUSION, STRANGE BEHAVIOR, AND VIOLENCE.
THERE WERE SEVERAL INSTANCES WHERE PEOPLE ENDED UP ...
... COMMITTING ASSAULT OR MURDER, OR HURTING OR KILLING THEMSELVES.
THE CITIZENS OF HINAMIZAWA HASTILY FLED BACK TO THEIR VILLAGE.
AND THE MISFORTUNES THAT BEFELL THOSE WHO LEFT CAME TO BE KNOWN AS...

...
"OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE"...
...ALONG WITH "OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE."
THUS, THE ALMOST-EXTINGUISHED FAITH IN OYASHIRO-SAMA REVIVED...
IS THAT WHAT HAPPENED TO ME AFTER I WENT TO IBARAKI...?
THOSE WHO LEFT THE VILLAGE WENT INSANE AND EVENTUALLY TURNED TO VIOLENCE.
.....
WHAT COULD THE TRUE NATURE OF THE CURSE POSSIBLY BE?
IS THERE MORE IN HERE...?

THIS IS...
AH.
...THERE WERE RUMORS OF A CERTAIN STRANGE DISEASE.
IN THE MEIJI ERA...
ACCORDING TO THE VILLAGERS WHO CAME BACK AFTER ENCOUNTERING THE CURSE...
...WHEN THEY HAD LEFT HINAMIZAWA, THEIR WOUNDS HAD FESTERED.
THEY HAD BEEN STRUCK WITH A VIOLENT ITCH.
AND IN THE END ...

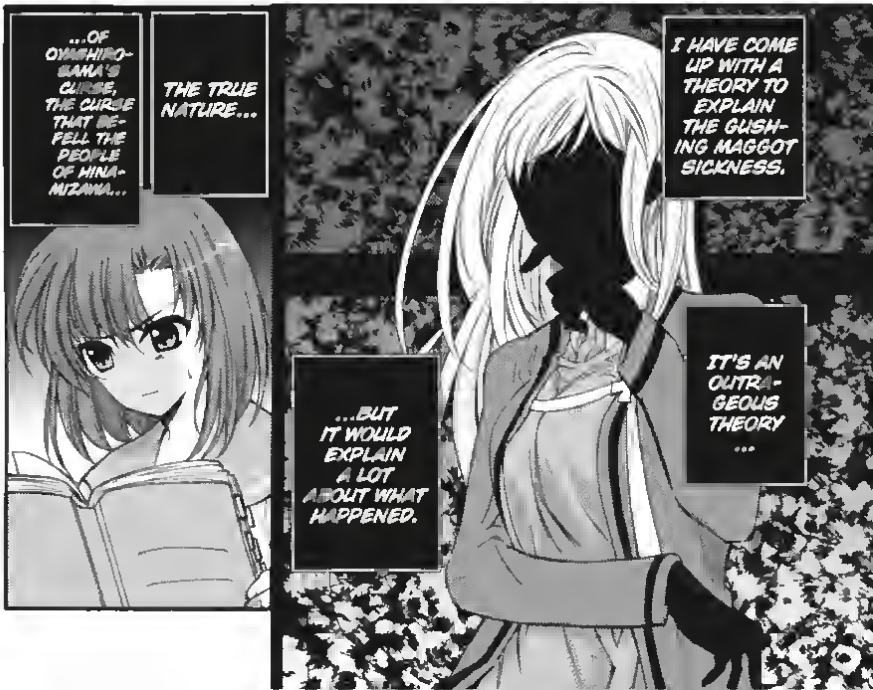
...AND DEVOURED THEIR ENTIRE BODIES.
...MAGGOTS HAD POURED OUT OF THEM...

MAGGOTS ...!!

...FEARED WHAT THEY CALLED "UJIWAKI-BYOU," THE "GUSHING MAGGOT SICKNESS."
THE PEOPLE OF THE TIME...
SO THAT REALLY WASN'T JUST MY OWN DELUSION...
MAGGOTS ATE THEM FROM THE INSIDE...
ARE THE MAGGOTS JUST A HALLUCI-NATION?
BUT NO ONE HAS EVER ACTUALLY WITNESSED MAGGOTS COMING OUT OF ANYONE.
...HAVE HAD THE SAME HALLUCINATION OF MAGGOTS ...?
BUT COULD ALL THE HINAMIZAWA VILLAGERS WHO WENT FAR AND WIDE TO EARN THEIR LIVING ...

TAKANO-SAN GAVE ME THE SCRAPBOOK BECAUSE IT HAPPENED TO ME.
SHE THOUGHT THAT SINCE I'VE SEEN THE MAGGOTS, I MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING.
MAGGOTS...

IS THAT POSSIBLE ...?
BUT IF IT WASN'T A DELUSION, DOES THAT MEAN THERE REALLY WERE MAGGOTS?


...OF OYAMAHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE, THE CURSE THAT BE-FELL THE PEOPLE OF HINA-MIZAWA...
THE TRUE NATURE...
I HAVE COME UP WITH A THEORY TO EXPLAIN THE GUSH-ING MAGGOT SICKNESS.
IT'S AN OUTRA-GEOUS THEORY ...
...BUT IT WOULD EXPLAIN A LOT ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED.

BASA (RUSTLE)
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THIS?
THIS IS THE TRUTH BEHIND OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE!?
...THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE...!
YORO (STAGGER)
GYU (CLENCH)
THAT'S JUST TOO IMPROB-ABLE.
BUT...

...IS IT BECAUSE THIS IS THE TRUTH...
...THAT THE FANATICAL BELIEVERS KILLED TAKANO-SAN?
TO PROTECT THIS SECRET ...!?
REINA, PHONE!
SIKU (WINCE)
REINA!
IT'S A MAN NAMED OOISHI-SAN FROM OKINOMIYA BOOKS.

MIIN (BUZZZZ)
ミーン
MIN
ミンミンミン…
MIN
MIN
THE NEXT DAY.
MAN, IT'S HOT...
I'LL BET YOU HAD AIR-CONDITIONED CLASSROOMS IN THE CITY.
IT SURE IS...
PATA (FLAP)
110
PATA
YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY PULL IT OFF, MION.
...HA HA.
THEN ALL THE STUDENTS COULD STORM THE FACULTY ROOM AND TAKE IT OVER.
THAT IS SOMETHING TO BE JEALOUS OF.
HEH HEH
IF THERE WAS ANY AIR-CONDITIONING, IT WAS ONLY IN THE FACULTY ROOM.
OF COURSE WE DIDN'T.

...RENA'S ABSENT TODAY.
APPARENTLY THE SCHOOL GOT A CALL SAYING SHE HAD A COLD...

YOU MEAN HER COLD?
NO. I'M WONDERING IF SHE STILL HASN'T LET GO OF YOU KNOW

—THAT RENA. SHE HASN'T BEEN DOING SO GOOD LATELY.
I HOPE SHE'S OKAY

EVEN IF SHE THINKS SHE'S GOTTEN OVER IT, THAT COULD LEAVE SOME DEEP SCARS ON HER HEART...

SHE'LL BE FINE.
EH?

AT THE TRASH HEAP, WE ALL FORGAVE EACH OTHER OF OUR CRIMES.
BUT SHE KILLED TWO PEOPLE AND CUT UP THEIR BODIES.

RENA'S NOT ALONE.
I'M SURE TIME WILL HEAL HER HEART.
MEW! ☆
...SO WE CAN HELP RENA WHEN SHE WANTS US TO, SIR.
NIPAAA CHEEEEANO
にぱー☆
WE JUST HAVE TO BE BY HER SIDE...
MIIN CRUZZZZ
ミーン
ミンミンミン…
MIN...
MIN
MIN
I GUESS I'LL WAIT BY HER SIDE UNTIL SHE REGAINS HER FOOTING...
MAYBE THAT'S BEST.
...BE BY HER SIDE...

KEI-ICHI-KUN!
SO WITHOUT RENA, THERE'S NO CLUB.
AH ...!
RENA...
SHH! DON'T TALK SO LOUD!
WHAT'S UP? WHAT ARE YOU DOING OVER THERE?
... KEIICHI-KUN, I...
...WHAT'S GOING ON? YOU LOOK SO SERI-OUS...

...I THINK THEY MIGHT KILL ME...
EH?
AH!
WH... WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...?
ガサ...

IT'S NOT THAT...
ARE THEY OUT FOR REVENGE?
DON'T TELL ME IT'S A FRIEND OF THAT RINA CHICK?
WHAT THE...? WHAT IS RENA TALKING ABOUT?
TAKANO-SAN? YOU MEAN THE NURSE, TAKANO-SAN?
...THE SCRAP-BOOK TAKANO-SAN GAVE ME...
I THINK THEY'RE AFTER ...
EH?
TAKANO-SAN...WAS MURDERED.
...TAKANO-SAN AND TOMITAKE-SAN DIED.
AFTER WE SAID GOOD-BYE ON THE NIGHT OF THE COTTON DRIFTING...

...DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS OF GIFU...
AND TAKANO-SAN WAS BURNED TO DEATH...
HE CLAWED OUT HIS THROAT AND DIED.
TOMITAKE-SAN WAS STRUCK BY OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE.
B... BURNED TO DEATH...?
WHAT THE...? I HAVEN'T HEARD ANY-THING ABOUT THAT...
TOMITAKE-SAN AND TAKANO-SAN WERE MURDERED?
WHA...?
A DETECTIVE TOLD RENA ABOUT A SECRET INVESTIGA-TION?
THE POLICE ARE KEEPING THE INVESTI-GATION QUIET.
HE SAID HE WANTS ME TO HELP WITH THEIR SECRET INVESTIGATION.
THAT'S WHAT THE DETECTIVE NAMED OOISHI-SAN TOLD ME.

IS SHE TEASING ME?
...BUT RENA ISN'T THE TYPE TO JOKE ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
A GRAVE SECRET?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
AND SHE LEARNED A GRAVE SECRET ABOUT THE TRUTH OF OYASHIRO-SAMA.
SHE WAS RESEARCHING OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE.
...I THINK THAT TAKANO-SAN WAS KILLED BECAUSE OF HER RESEARCH.
I DON'T HAVE ANY POSITIVE PROOF.
I...CAN'T TELL YOU YET.
...BUT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE AT THIS POINT.
I'VE EXPERIENCED THE GUSHING MAGGOT DISEASE...

RENA, WHAT IN THE WORLD IS WRONG?
SHE SAYS SHE'S GOING TO BE KILLED ...
THERE'S ANOTHER THING THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
MAGGO— WHAT?
I'M SORRY. I KNOW NONE OF THIS MAKES SENSE.
... KEIICHI-KUN.
SFX: GYU (SQUEEZE)
BUT...
...I'M TOO NERVOUS TO KEEP IT TO MYSELF.
RENA...

WE JUST HAVE TO BE BY HER SIDE...
...SO WE CAN HELP RENA WHEN SHE WANTS US TO, SIR.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.
BUT RIGHT NOW IT LOOKS LIKE RENA'S GOT AN INCREDIBLE WEIGHT ON HER SHOULDERS.
RENA.
GU (CLENCH)
ｸﾞｯ

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.
BUT I'M ON YOUR SIDE.
I'M ONE PERSON YOU CAN TRUST.
... KEIICHI-KUN ...
BUT I DON'T QUITE GET WHAT'S GOING ON.
COULD YOU GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE DETAIL?

RIGHT...
AFTER THAT, RENA STARTED TALKING.
SHE TOLD ME ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT FANATICAL FOLLOWERS OF OYASHIRO-SAMA...
...WERE EXECUTING A SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS DEATHS EVERY YEAR ON THE NIGHT OF THE COTTON DRIFTING TO REVIVE FAITH IN OYASHIRO-SAMA.
ALSO, TAKANO-SAN WAS RESEARCHING OYASHIRO-SAMA...
...AND MAY HAVE BEEN KILLED BECAUSE SHE LEARNED SOME SECRET.
RENA TOLD ME THAT THE SCRAPBOOK, WITH THE FRUITS OF TAKANO-SAN'S RESEARCH, IS CURRENTLY IN HER POSSESSION...
...AND THAT THE FANATICS MIGHT BE AFTER HER BECAUSE OF THAT BOOK.
TO BE HONEST...
...IT'S NOT THAT EASY TO BELIEVE.

THAT'S WHAT GIVES CREDENCE TO THIS WHOLE STORY...
BUT IF THE POLICE SAID SO, THEN IT'S MOST LIKELY TRUE THAT TAKANO-SAN WAS KILLED.

YES.
...IS THE SONOZAKI FAMILY?
AND ACCORDING TO TAKANO-SAN'S THEORY, THE CENTER OF THAT GROUP OF FANATICS...

I GUESS THAT'S POSSIBLE ...
MII-CHAN MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT IT...
THERE'S PROBABLY A CONSPIRACY MOVING BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE SONOZAKI FAMILY.
...THAT MION WOULD BE INVOLVED IN SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
I REALLY CAN'T BELIEVE ...

BUBOROHO VRROOOM
フロロロロ…
THAT CAR AGAIN...
?
WHEW...
.....
THAT STARTLED ME. CARS DON'T COME BY HERE VERY OFTEN.

I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE. THAT WHITE VAN...
...I THINK IT'S FOLLOWING ME...
H... HEY...
... ARE YOU SERIOUS ...?
I HAVE TO GO HOME BEFORE THEY FIND ME.
SEE YOU LATER, KEIICHI-KUN.
H-HEY, RENA!
I'M REALLY GLAD I COULD TALK TO YOU...
... AND ...
...DON'T TELL MII-CHAN OR RIKA-CHAN...
...OR SATOKO-CHAN WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT.

RENA...

THERE'S A STRANGE SECRET SOCIETY HERE IN HINAMIZAWA THAT'S NOT AFRAID TO COMMIT MURDER.
AND THEY'RE CARRYING OUT AN EVIL PLOT.

THEY KILLED TAKANO-SAN BECAUSE SHE GOT TOO CLOSE TO IT.
AND THEY MIGHT KILL RENA NEXT. IS THAT IT...?

THEY HAVE A GRAVE SECRET.
AND NOW RENA HAS THAT SECRET...

...BUT WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT CALMLY, IT SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A MANGA. COULD IT REALLY BE HAPPENING?
RENA LOOKED VERY SERIOUS...
IS SHE SURE THIS ISN'T SOME JOKE TAKANO-SAN SET UP...?
AND IS TAKANO-SAN'S SCRAPBOOK REALLY THAT IMPORTANT?
...BUT MAYBE SHE'S JUST SEEING THINGS BECAUSE SHE'S TIRED...
SHE SAID SHE WAS BEING FOLLOWED BY A WHITE VAN...
...AND MAKING HER FALL FOR THESE JOKES ...?
THAT RENA. MAYBE THE SHOCK OF THE OTHER DAY IS AFFECTING HER NERVES ...

!!
...A WHITE...
...VAN...

...THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT IT'S LOOKING FOR RENA.
NO, EVEN IF IT WAS...
ZA
ZA
ZA

ZA (STEP)
IT WASN'T NECESSARILY THE SAME ONE AS LAST TIME.
...NO... CALM DOWN.

HEY, KID.
AI AGE

EH...?
DID YOU SEE A GIRL SOMEWHERE ALONG THE ROAD HERE?

YES...?
Y...

A WHITE HAT, A WHITE DRESS, AND A PURPLE RIBBON.
THAT'S RENA !!
A GIRL WEARING A WHITE HAT AND A WHITE DRESS?
WITH A PURPLE RIBBON?
HMM.
N...
NO...
WELL, WE'RE OFF.
SORRY FOR HOLDIN' YOU UP.
IT'S JUST I PASSED BY A GIRL BEFORE, BUT THEN THERE'S A BOY COMIN' MY WAY SO I WAS JUST A LITTLE CURIOUS, IS ALL.
OH, THERE'S NO REAL REASON FOR MY ASKIN'.
.....

...REALLY WAS LOOKING FOR RENA ...
THAT GUY...
BUBORORO (VRRROOOOM)
WOULD YOU GO TO THE TROUBLE OF STOPPING YOUR CAR FOR THAT?
HE WAS JUST A LITTLE CURIOUS?
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT...
IT'S JUST LIKE RENA SAID.
カナカナカナ...
KANA
KANA CHIRP
THEY'RE AFTER THE SCRAP-BOOK!

...I NEED TO BE MORE CAREFUL WHEN I GO OUT FROM NOW ON. .
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, KEIICHI-KUN.
WHEN YOU TOLD ME BEFORE, I ONLY HALF-BELIEVED IT.
I'M SORRY, RENA.
Special forces?
YES. I THINK THEY'RE FROM THE SPECIAL FORCES.
Are they really from the Sonozaki family?
THE MINISTER'S GRAND-SON...? THAT SOUNDS LIKE SOMEBODY MADE IT UP...
To end the dam war, that force...
...went so far as to kidnap the Minister of Con-struction's grandson.
...ORGANIZED AN ELITE FORCE OF SPECIALLY TRAINED MEN.
THEY SAY THAT DURING THE DAM WAR, THE SONOZAKI FAMILY...
A LITTLE WHILE AGO, I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED THAT ONE EITHER.
THE SONOZAKI FAMILY'S SPECIAL FORCES.

I'VE SEEN THE WHITE VAN...
BUT NOW IT'S DIFFER-ENT.

?
Hey, Rena...
THEY'RE AFTER RENA BECAUSE SHE KNOWS OYASHIRO-SAMA'S SECRET...

WHAT IS THIS SECRET OF OYASHIRO-SAMA'S THAT HAS EVERY-ONE SO WORKED UP?
THEY KILLED TAKANO-SAN, AND NOW THEY'RE AFTER YOU.

What the hell was written in that scrap-book?
...tell me already.

HOW COULD I IGNORE THAT?
YOU'RE— MY FRIEND IS IN DANGER!

.....

HELL IF I CARE!
But once you know the secret, it could put you in danger too.

KEIICHI-KUN...

...IT WOULD COMPLETELY DESTROY ALL FAITH IN OYASHIRO-SAMA.
IF THE VILLAGERS KNEW ABOUT THIS...

ALL RIGHT, I'LL TELL YOU...
... THANK YOU.

THAT'S WHY THE FANATICS ARE GETTING DESPERATE.
BECAUSE THEY'LL KNOW THE TRUE NATURE OF OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE.
THE TRUE NATURE OF OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE...
WHAT IS IT!?
IT'S...

A PARASITE.
WH...
WHAT ...?

IT'S IN ME, AND IT'S IN YOU.
THERE'S A PARASITE IN THE BRAINS OF PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN HINA-MIZAWA.
...MAKE US HALLUCINATE, AND MAKE US KILL PEOPLE.
THEY CONTROL OUR BRAINS...

THE PARASITES ...
...ARE THE TRUTH BEHIND OYASHIRO-SAMA'S CURSE.
PARASITES —!?

ABOUT THE "ATONEMENT ARC" WHEN IT WAS BEING WRITTEN

ORIGINAL STORY, SUPERVISOR: RYUKISHI07

VOLUME TWO OF THE "ATONEMENT ARC" IS OVER, AND OUR STORY IS FINALLY RUSHING TO ITS CLIMAX.

OF ALL THE ARCS IN *HIGURASHI WHEN THEY CRY*, THE "ATONEMENT ARC" HAS GREAT SIGNIFICANCE AND IS A MAJOR TURNING POINT IN THE SERIES. IN THAT SENSE, THE NEXT VOLUME, VOLUME THREE OF THE "ATONEMENT ARC," MAY BE THE ONE VOLUME OF ALL THE VOLUMES OF *HIGURASHI* THAT YOU REALLY WON'T BE ABLE TO TAKE YOUR EYES AWAY FROM. I HOPE YOU WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF THE "ATONEMENT ARC" AS WOVEN BY SUZURAGI-SENSEI'S PEN!

NOW, WHEN I STARTED WRITING *HIGURASHI* IT WASN'T VERY WELL KNOWN. BUT WITH THE RELEASE OF THE "EYE OPENING ARC," THE ARC RIGHT BEFORE THIS ARC, IT BECAME VERY POPULAR, AND MY PARENTS FOUND OUT ABOUT IT. SO, FOR THE "ATONEMENT ARC," THERE WERE SOME HEARTWARMING AND EMBARRASSING EPISODES DURING WHICH I GOT ADVICE FROM MY PARENTS ABOUT THE STORY'S SETTING AND THE LIKE. FOR MY UNLEARNED SELF, THE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF MY PARENTS, WHO HAD LIVED MORE THAN TWICE AS LONG AS I HAD, WAS A POWERFUL WEAPON.

...THINKING ABOUT IT, GOING TO OTHER PEOPLE FOR ADVICE INSTEAD OF WORRYING ABOUT THINGS ON YOUR OWN IS ONE OF THE THINGS KEIICHI IMPLORED RENA TO DO IN THE "ATONEMENT ARC." MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE STOPPED BEING EMBARRASSED AND ASKED THEM FOR MORE HELP. I'M GRATEFUL TO MY SCIENTIFIC FATHER, WHO LOOKED IT RIGHT UP WHEN I ASKED "HOW MANY LITERS OF XXXX WOULD YOU NEED TO XXX A CLASSROOM?" (WRY LAUGH)

EVERYONE, IF THERE'S ANYTHING BOTHERING YOU, PLEASE GO TO YOUR FATHER OR MOTHER FIRST.

THE COMIC VERSION OF THE "ATONEMENT ARC" IS FINALLY REACHING ITS CLOSING HALF. EVEN GREATER TRAGEDY WILL BEFALL THE CLUB MEMBERS. BUT TRAGEDY ISN'T ALL THAT AWAITS THEM. I'LL WORK HARD SO THAT YOU CAN ENJOY THE FUTURE INTENSE DEVELOPMENTS, SO PLEASE READ ON.
-Special thanks-
PARTNERS: TASHIRO-SAMA, TANA-SAMA, NIWAKO-SAMA, BANCHO-SAMA, MOYOMOSO-SAMA, RICO-SAMA, AND YOSHIICHI AKAHITO-SENSEI.
AND YOU!
THANK YOU FOR STICKING WITH US THIS FAR. BECAUSE OF ALL OF YOU, VOLUME TWO OF THE "ATONEMENT ARC" HAS MADE IT SAFELY TO PUBLICATION. THANK YOU VERY MUCH! I GOT TO DRAW A LOT OF HIGURASHI AGAIN, AND IT WAS FUN. IF THIS VOLUME COULD BE PRINTED IN FULL COLOR, IT WOULD BE VERY VIVID, PAINTED IN RED. I LIKE IT.
-Special thanks-
ORIGINAL STORY SUPERVISOR: RYUKISHI07, 8T-SAMA, YATAZAKURA-SAMA
EDITORS: KOIZUMI-SAMA, KOUNO-SAMA
THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SENT ME LETTERS. THEY'RE A BIG ENCOURAGEMENT.
KARIN SUZUKAZE

GOOD-BYE, "THIS" RENA RYUGU.
LET'S BE FRIENDS WHEN YOU'RE THE "NEXT" RENA RYUGU.
THEN WHO WAS THE TAKANO-SAN I SAW!?
TAKANO-SAN WAS ALREADY DEAD ON THE NIGHT OF THE FESTIVAL.
THE POLICE ARE AFTER RENA!?

THE TRAGEDY FINALLY REACHES ITS GREATEST TURNING POINT.

"ATONEMENT ARC" VOLUME 3

HIGURASHI
WHEN THEY CRY
ATONEMENT ARC ②

RYUKISHI07
Karin Suzuragi

Translation: Alethea Nibley and Athena Nibley

Lettering: AndWorld Design

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Higurashi WHEN THEY CRY Atonement Arc, Vol. 2
©RYUKISHI07/07th Expansion ©2007 Karin Suzuragi/SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. First published in Japan in 2007 by SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. English translation rights arranged with SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD. and Hachette Book Group through Tuttle-Mori Agency, Inc.

Translation ©2011 by SQUARE ENIX CO., LTD.

All rights reserved. In accordance with the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, the scanning, uploading, and electronic sharing of any part of this book without the permission of the publisher is unlawful piracy and theft of the author's intellectual property. If you would like to use material from the book (other than for review purposes), prior written permission must be obtained by contacting the publisher at permissions@hbgusa.com. Thank you for your support of the author's rights.

Yen Press
Hachette Book Group
237 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017

www.HachetteBookGroup.com
www.YenPress.com

Yen Press is an imprint of Hachette Book Group, Inc. The Yen Press name and logo are trademarks of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

The publisher is not responsible for websites (or their content) that are not owned by the publisher.

First Yen Press ebook Edition: April 2014

ebook ISBN: 978-0-316-23774-1

App ISBN: 978-0-316-23870-0